

**Wilhelmina Barns-Graham & Margaret Mellis-**

**The Gendered Construction of 'St Ives'  
Display, Positioning and Displacement**

**By**

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## Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy have I been registered for any other University award.

This study was financed with the aid of a studentship from Falmouth College of Arts and myself.

During the research period I have published:

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(1996) 'The Blue Whale', Exhibition catalogue of S. Nachson's video installation, in Janco-Dada Museum, Ein-Hod, Israel.

(1997) 'Wilhelmina Barns-Graham: New Paintings' Introduction to exhibition at The New Millennium Gallery, St Ives.

(1998) 'Cornubia- the gendered construction of the St Ives School', in *Women Artists and Modernism*, K Deepwell (ed) Manchester University Press.

Presented papers at conferences:

July 1995, *Shuli Nachshon, Health, Gender and Ethnic Self-Identification*, FAHN Conference, Leeds.

September 1995, *Women Modernist Artists in the West Country*, Feminism & The Aesthetics of Difference, Conference, London/Falmouth.

April 1996, Discourses of British Regional Identities and Internal colonialism, as constructed in 1985 exhibition of St Ives, at University of Glasgow 'post-theory' conference.

July 1996, Guest speaker at the opening of Shuli Nachshon's video installation, *Blue Whale*, at Ein Hod Janco-Dada Museum, Ein-Hod, Israel.

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July 1997, *Genealogy and Dynastic mapping of value in St-Ives' modernism*, presented at The Women South-West Network conference, *It is a Family Affair*, Exeter.

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April 1998, *Coming up Trumps: Popular Culture and Ben Nicholson Cards Paintings* Presented at the AAAH conference *Identities*, Exeter.

June 1999, *Ben Nicholson's Saint-Remy '33: A Black-and White Issue?* Falmouth College of Arts conference *Differential Spaces: The European Axes of British Modernism*.

April 2000, *Absent Bodies and Identity: W. Barns-Graham and M. Mellis*, AAAH conference, Edinburgh.

June 2001, *Wheat Fields and the new notion of land, in the art of Shuli Nachshon*, Art Culture, Nature conference, Arizona University.

#### Curated and organized Exhibitions:

March, 1995. Curated an exhibition of four feminist practitioners in Exeter to mark International Women's Day at the University of Exeter.

Feb-April (1998) *In/Sight* Exhibition and catalogue, The University of Exeter, an exhibition of veteran women artists in the south-west of Britain, including: Gillian Ayers, W. Barns-Graham, M. Mellis, Sandra Blow, Rose Hilton, Liz Nicol, Valerie Reardon, Sandy Brown, Partou Zia, Ceria Strong.

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Annually the AAAH Conferences

The feminist Artists and Historians (FAHN) Conferences

*Barbara Hepworth Conference* at Tate Liverpool, 1995

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*Adrian Stokes Conference* The University of Bristol, June 2002



## Abstract

### Wilhelmina Barns-Graham & Margaret Mellis-The Gendered Construction of 'St Ives', Display, Positioning and Displacement

Nedira Yakir

Compared to other avant-gardes of modernism the detailed analysis of what has come to be known as the 'St Ives School' is still in its infancy, and lags behind the detailed attention lavished on modernisms in Paris, New York and other western capitals. Most publications about St Ives are by English non-academic agents: The Tate, and popularist writers. Both groups are entrenched to varying degrees in monographic writing that privileges and enhances the masculine myth of the (male) artist as genius. This thesis examines the means and modes that brought about masculine reputation construction and aims to deconstruct much of its assumptions. The First chapter examines the textual evaluative procedures that predominate in art historical writing; the second chapter describes, analyses and deconstructs the 1985 exhibition at the Tate Gallery London, as an event that established the myth and canon of the so-called school of St Ives. Chapters three and four focus on two women painters Margaret Mellis and Wilhelmina Barns-Graham that I argue have been expunged from the school. Both chapters address two consecutive issues: first the artistic *milieu*, or artworld the artists were involved in, second - their artistic output. This thesis does not present a survey of any kind, instead it aims to render the dominant narrative unstable, and to open up gaps for my intervention so as to redress the imbalances rooted within this topic and question some of its assumptions, mainly in relation to women painters. I have used Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* both as an overall structuring principle and as a methodological tool in linking the societal and individual so as to expose the gendered imbalance of appraisal in both domains of structure and artistic subjectivity.



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## Chapter 1

# Methods and methodologies

## A. INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Gendered asymmetry of evaluation operates across most categories of art historical writing and the art world.<sup>1</sup> The gendered monograph and masculinist Artwriting<sup>2</sup> are two textual manifestations that not only generally write women out of modernism, but specifically frame the construction of 'St Ives'<sup>3</sup> in the erasure from its ranks of women painters who have been part of this movement (Appendix 3). In this chapter I am reflecting on the methods and methodologies that have informed my study of the manifestations of this gendered asymmetry in the canonical narrative of 'St Ives' starting from broad issues in the first section, following with issues that have emerged from my empirical studies (archival search and interviewing artists) in the second, and concluding with general theoretical observations in the last section. My basic assumption is that the canonical formulation of the popularly called 'The School of St Ives' had its most significant formulation in the 1985 exhibition at the Tate Gallery dedicated to the group of artists claimed to be a modernist British avant-garde. Since the exhibition, all popular perceptions and urban myths as well as scholarly publications and commercial exhibitions have replicated and reinforced the scenario offered by the 1985 event (figs 1 & 2). For that reason I felt that an analysis of the positioning and appraisal of women painters necessitated to be analysed within the confines that that

<sup>1</sup> As has been argued in the two seminal feminist publications that have become classics texts of feminist art history: Linda Nochlin (orig.1971) 'Why have there been no great women artists?' reprinted in Linda Nochlin (1989) *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, London, Thames and Hudson, pp 145-178; also Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock (1981) *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, New York and London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

<sup>2</sup> I am using the term in the sense defined by David Carrier (1987) *Artwriting*, Amherst, as a kind of genre of writing rather than as purely providing historical facts.

narrative established and codified. Section B. of this chapter, is mainly a report of the methods I have employed and some observations about the nature of collating data and the theoretical issues arising from that. Central to this discussion is the question of the nature of interviews between researcher and artists, in my case, the interviewees M. Mellis and W. Barns-Graham. The analysis of my interviews resulted both from my experience and from my critique of other, earlier conducted interviews which lead me to assess the process and value of interview in modern art history. In section C. of this chapter I consider the tensions between institutional and organizational distortive claimed historicism and the artists various ways of self-positioning. I consider the methodological implications of the case study of The Crypt Group, (Chapter 4) a relatively marginalized event equally in *St Ives* and in the historiography of 'St Ives'; in contrast, to the positive evaluation of The Penwith Society of Artists in Cornwall (PSAC). Within that comparative framework, I examine how historical distortions about both societies came about, and how these impacted the gendered Artwriting of artistic life in and around St Ives.

The specific and general considerations of my argument are underpinned by a range of examinations: about Art History Writing; its genres, modes of verification, the status of artists' statements. Essential to these is an evaluation of diverse methods of data gathering and the *technique* employed in order to gain access to information at the first instance and their subsequent interpretation. Methodology is on one hand the underlying theory determining to a great extent how research should proceed and finally the analysis of the data gathered.<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault's analysis of power, archaeology of knowledge and genealogy, as well as Pierre Bourdieu's particular formulation of the relationship between

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<sup>3</sup> I am using the following forms: 'St Ives' when indicating the modernist construct, *St Ives* when referring to the 1985 exhibition and St Ives when discussing the town.

<sup>4</sup> Sandra Harding (ed) (1987) *Feminism & Methodology*, Milton Keynes, Indiana University Press & Open University Press,.

agencies and structures informs the analysis of these issues. Bourdieu's formulation of his concepts of *habitus* and Symbolic Capital inform both my analysis as well as the overall structure of this thesis. In terms of the rational of the thesis overall I look at Symbolic Capital in terms of the role of the national, museal narration in conferring value (chapter 2). Throughout my thesis I identify general societal structures of domination, more in line with a Foucauldian notion of power, and how these naturalized societal preconceived notions impacted the evaluation of the women artists. Symbolic capital is also contained in the act of inclusion or exclusion of women painters from the historiography of local art grouping, societies and exhibition activities. In both chapters 3 and 4 I divide the discussion of the painters Mellis and Barns-Graham to their roles within the local groups and to their art. One of the definitions of *Habitus* is that it is "a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways and which may be relatively homogeneous for individuals from similar backgrounds."<sup>5</sup> This definition denies an autonomous reading of actions and reactions and anchors them within sets of societal conditioning possibilities. It looks at agents as possessing only relative freedom to act within given fields or market wherein symbolic capital is being acquired, since it is symbolic capital which is the expression or manifestation of habitus during social exchanges.<sup>6</sup> The notion of linguistic practice or *linguistic habitus* which is understood to be "that sub-set of dispositions acquired in the course of learning to speak in particular context (the family, the peer group, the school, etc.)"<sup>7</sup> can be appropriated and applied to artistic *habitus*. In my appropriation of term I read the 'learning to speak' as the agent's informed strategic use of both their artistic intention and expression within given available structures, with their constraints and openings for change and redefinition. It hinges on the disposition of the individual's temperament and understanding

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<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*, (ed. and intro.) J.B. Thompson, Trans. G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, p 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid p 17.

of the fields to position themselves and operate in a way that negotiates their expressive drive and their positioning within structures and discourses. I find the model useful for the analysis of the writing of 'St Ives' as a discourse that oscillates in an unresolved manner between two conflicting narrative genres, the tension between the genre of a heroic monograph and that of the discourse of a revolutionary avant-garde, in other words, between agency and structure. The concepts of *habitus* and Symbolic Power offer a paradigm which offers a model that incorporates the two narratives, and also enables a reading of the volatile groups' gathering and dispersals that typified the dynamics of 'St Ives'. Bourdieu's theory of culture mediates between the historical schism between interpretations that are agency-driven and those that are structure-driven. The thesis aims to consider their work, their ideas about it and the structural, societal frameworks within which they have found themselves and what manoeuvring possibilities were available to them. I consider the artistic milieus within which the artists work, and symbolic power in self-positioning, as well as Hayden White's notion of history as a narrative, with a feminist slant about the gendering of historical narrative and language. The question of how power structures impact on the construction of 'St Ives' permeates in different degrees the whole thesis, even if more noticeable in the discussion about the internal politics of the artists in the Peninsular. My argument springs from the exposition of how, in the case of 'St Ives', the museal terms established its codified history in an effective version which expunged women painters as significant artists.

A cluster of three interrelated issues is dovetailed in my intervention of the Artwriting of 'St Ives': 1. The analysis of the structures, whereby women artists are being subjected to asymmetrical evaluation in the realms of creativity, professionalism and societal involvements; 2. The impact of gendered reading that has naturalized implicit hierarchies of

value that renders marginalizations as a multi-layered system;<sup>8</sup> 3. The strategies adopted by women artists in order to retain a professional life of creativity, recognition as modernists (both by their male colleagues and the art-world at large) and most importantly of their official recognition. An integral part of these aspects is the issue of the concept 'the moderns' which was the term used by 'St Ives' artists when referring to their perception of belonging to a cosmopolitan avant-garde. The term related to a wide range of differing stylistic practices, and my thesis aims to highlight its strategic use, as well as its pluralism in the way the overall term served to promote themselves to the Art world nationally and internationally, but was also used to cover up the different expressions internally.

The starting point of my argument – in Chapter 2 – is a detailed analysis of the catalogue of the 1985 event/text the exhibition *St Ives 1939-64*, 1985, Tate Gallery, London.<sup>9</sup> I begin with a close reading of the 'facts' presented in the catalogue that are claimed to define and subsequently have codified the dominant notion of 'St Ives', deconstructing that given information by reading the text against itself. In the process, I identify the defining categories for significance, exposing inconsistencies within these, and identify the specific nature of its bias. Identifying its determinate explicit and implicit categories, I argue, makes visible the contradictions and omissions contained within its narrative. These inconsistencies, in turn, open up gaps for my proposed adjustments, retrievals, and feminist interventions, in chapters 3-5, in which I propose an alternative, or rather modified notion of 'St Ives' which includes the art, actions and achievements of women painters.

<sup>8</sup> Although in the discourse of the 1985 exhibition Barbara Hepworth is given a pivotal status, second only to Ben Nicholson, otherwise, a differentiation exists between men and women painters. In effect, the marginal historical position allocated to women painters is replicating in an extreme mode the lived experience of these painters.

<sup>9</sup> David Brown (ed) (1985) *St Ives 1939-64: Twenty Five Years of Painting, Sculpture and Pottery*, London, The Tate Gallery. Hereafter *St Ives* (1985).

However, this focus on gendered asymmetry in the discourse of 'St Ives' does not imply that this is the only omission from that narrative. Other, equally important topics are also absent from *St Ives*, such as: the ambivalent relationship between the self-fashioned 'Moderns' and the so-defined 'traditionals' working in St Ives; the Surrealist artists active in the peninsular (Sven Berlin, John Tunnard, Ithell Colquhoun, Francis Bacon, Reuben Mednikoff); the place of crafts; and the regional and racial identities of artists. In my discussion I incorporate these topics but not to the full extent that would give them justice, such detailed attention lies outside the remit of my argument. The non-articulated category of gender, which is a societal rather than an art-specific category, and how it was perceived in relation to the group or to those individuals claimed to be its most significant members, is the thread that links the non-linear sequence of my discussion. And yet the framework within which I examine this gendered asymmetry is the one defined in *St Ives* using it as an intellectual device, to ensure that both male and female artists are considered under the same categories. Another, as important reason for retaining the categories, is that in doing so I adhere to the self-perception of the two living women artists Margaret Mellis and Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, who see themselves as veteran and as integral part to 'St Ives'. The final reason for retaining the concept is that despite my notion of 'St Ives' as a hindsight construct,<sup>10</sup> the notion has become so ingrained in the shared imagination within the academic, popular as well as the curatorial realms, that my argument has to accept it and take it into account despite its bias. My intervention therefore, is one that points out to the inconsistencies to the rhetorical element in arguing that there is coherency in the 'School' and inserting into its already existent diversity of practices and aesthetic expressions the contributions of women painters.

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<sup>10</sup> In this I agree with the argument put forward by Stephens in chapter One of his Ph.D. thesis, Christopher Stephens (1997) *St Ives Artists and Landscape*, University of Sussex, unpublished Ph.D. thesis.

Despite the prolific publications of feminist critique during the last three decades, most of the postmodern feminist theorists have attended to issues of women's individual and collective subjectivity, identifying women artists as a speaking subjects mostly in either societal or psychoanalytical frameworks.<sup>11</sup> By and large these studies examine either single, individual women artists, or attempt to find a general paradigm that would be applicable to large groups of women artists. Thus, the studies are either gender specific, or focusing on women in opposition to the avant-gardes.<sup>12</sup> While the seminal articles initiating feminist art history addressed societal issues and the relationship of women artists to patriarchal cultural structures, for example in the articles of Nochlin (1971) Duncan (1973) and Pollock (1988)<sup>13</sup> since then the psychoanalytical reading and attention to a single woman artist tend to be the prevalent framing in feminist art historical writing. Except for Surrealist women, studies of women within or as part of the avant-gardes are still few and exceptional in the theoretical feminist publications (two examples are Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art). The few, but exemplary exceptions to the rule that did address these issues have informed my thesis and been the basis and models – with their wide range of topics, and discourses - on which I conducted my own study.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For instance Gill Perry (ed) (1999) *Gender and Art*, Yale University and The Open University. The chapter on women and class is also the chapter on design, while women and modernism and postmodernism of part 4 frames the issue in psychoanalytical discourse, pp 195-258.

<sup>12</sup> Gill Perry (1999) gives a succinct image of the fragmented non-organizational, relationship of women artists working in the styles of the French Fauves and Cubism pp 214-227.

<sup>13</sup> Griselda Pollock (1988) 'Modernity and the spaces of femininity' in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, London, Routledge.

<sup>14</sup> The exceptions are: Carol Duncan (1973) 'Virility and Domination in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Vanguard Painting', *Art Forum*, December, pp 30-39. Tamar Garb (1994) *Sister of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press. Janice Helland (1996) *The Studios of Frances and Margaret Macdonald*, Manchester, Manchester University Press. Mary Ann Caws (1990) *Women of Bloomsbury: Virginia, Vanessa and Carrington*, New York and London, Routledge. Alessandra Comini (1982) 'Gender or Genius? The Women Artists of German Expressionism' in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds.) *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, New York, Harper and Row, pp 271-291. John E. Bowlt and Matthew Drutt (eds) (1999) *Amazons of the Avant-Garde*, Exhibition catalogue, New York and London, Guggenheim Museum Publications and Royal Academy of Arts. Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace (1994) *Women Artists and Writers; Modernist (Im)positionings*, Routledge. Gill Perry (1995) *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, Manchester University Press. Jane Beckett and Deborah Cherry (1998) 'Modern women, modern spaces: metropolitan culture and Vorticism', in K. Deepwell (ed) *Women Artists and Modernism*, Manchester University Press, pp 36-54. Whitney Chadwick (1985) *Women Artists and the*

The defining qualities that secure official recognition are: artistic innovation and excellence, influence on other artists, being active not only in a creative way but also within the art world. Thus, the valued categories oscillate between creative proficiency and professional commitment, between avant-garde and avant-gardism.<sup>15</sup> The Artwriting of 'St Ives' contains additional specifics mainly a double requirement of having 'been there' either at the beginnings of the 'movement' and/or for a length of time, as well as an artistic output that can be claimed to be either figurative, relates to the landscape of West Cornwall, or else can be subsumed under the broadest notion of abstract art. Significantly, this model of combined categories has been applied only to male painters, and in a most accommodating flexibility at that. Women artists, others than Barbara Hepworth, have been left out of 'St Ives' even when they have fulfilled the defining categories in its construction.

In addition to my retrieval and intervention methodology my reflexive feminist methodology looks closely at the semiotic construct of gendered exhibition narrative of 'St Ives'. As Mieke Bal argued, a semiotic reading offers spaces for redefinition of the cleavage that springs from the differences between 'text' and 'context'.<sup>16</sup> My intervention aims to insert women's art (and other artistic expressions) by identifying, exposing and reinterpreting these spaces and silences. One of the discursive modes that enabled the marginalization of women artists was (and is still) the persistent reading of their work and life in a 'totalizing context'. Bal and Bryson have defined the insidious aspect of 'totalizing context' in the following way:

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*Surrealist Movement*, London and Boston, Thames and Hudson. Penelope Rosemont (ed) (1998) *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*, London, The Athlone Press.

<sup>15</sup> A distinction made by David Cottington (1998) *Cubism in the Shadow of War; The Avant-Garde and Politics in Paris 1905-1914*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, p 53.

<sup>16</sup> Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson (1998) 'Semiotics and Art History: A discussion of Context and Senders' in Donald Preziosi (ed) *The Art of Art History*, Oxford History of Art, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press.



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[I]t is only the goal of totalizing contexts that is being questioned... together with the accompanying tendency toward making a necessarily partial and incomplete formulation of context stand for the totality of contexts, by synecdoche.<sup>17</sup>

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In effect, they have appropriated and redefined Nietzsche's concept of 'chronological reversal' by way of analysing how context is operating in art history as a rhetorical device. This interpretation is pertinent for my project in general and is most explicitly manifest in the evaluation of the influence flows between Ben and Winifred Nicholson, where I maintain that a history has constructed a 'chronological reversal' by writing in the established modernist mode of attributing without question, the role of leading and influence to men, even when listing evidence to the contrary (Appendix 2).<sup>18</sup> Modernism has naturalized the perception of man artist as the master and woman as his disciple that there is a blind spot in its gaze which denies it from recognising any situation that is the other way round. And yet, my project differs from that of Bal and Bryson whose main concern of analysis is to unravel semiotically: 'What factors made the work of art what it is?'<sup>19</sup> Instead, my quest follows the question: 'what factors are being brought into play in order to cast the gendered notion of 'major artist(s)' in the construction of 'St Ives'?' It uses the trope of significance as a gender differential by allowing a large number of 'major artists', implying the Other as 'insignificant', and if women artists are significant, there is room for only one of them at the top.

Electing to write about two or more women painters has the methodological advantage of eschewing implicit gendered essentialism that monographic frame might imply, or implications of artistic autonomy. Instead, I wish to stress the differences in their

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p 248. For synecdoche in historiography see, Hayden White (1978) *Tropics of Discourse*, Baltimore, MD, John Hopkins University Press, for synecdoche in art history see Roskill (1989) *The Interpretation of Pictures*, Amherst, pp 3-35, also D. Carrier (1987) *Artwriting*, Amherst.

<sup>18</sup> I planned to dedicate a chapter to this issue and to the influence of Winifred on the making and maturation of Ben Nicholson. Unfortunately, at the stage of writing up it became clear that this would exceed the permissible words limit for a thesis. Therefore, and I will have to only refer to this aspect rather than being able to argue it in detail.

<sup>19</sup> Bal and Bryson (1998) p 249-251.

personalities, their art and its meaning, and thereby counteract their representation in either indexical or reductive terms. Wherever there are similarities and parallels between the artists, they emerge as belonging not to the artists' making, but to the effects of cultural representation to which they could only react, in Bourdieu's terms, rather than fully instigate. As acting agents they are individuals and different, but their diversity is ironed out by societal structures and the naturalised masculinist reception of their art.

### **The masculinity of the avant-garde<sup>20</sup>**

The question of how societal conventions have impacted on the appraisal of women artists has been introduced to art history in 1970 by Linda Nochlin's seminal article titled with the rhetorical question 'Why have there been no great women artist?' Since then many variants and expansions on that level have followed in the analysis of the place of women artists within the masculine order. To list those that are relevant to this study: Carol Duncan defined the masculinist nature of the avant-garde and its subsequent construction,<sup>21</sup> while Lisa Tickner examined a similar aspect focusing on British modernism<sup>22</sup> and Katy Deepwell studied the professional path of women artists in the interwar years.<sup>23</sup> The configuration of 'St Ives' is still differently inflected by the presence and relative recognition of Barbara Hepworth as one of its central figures. 'St Ives' like its predecessor Bloomsbury presents a mixed gendered configuration of an avant-garde that offers a case study wherein gender needs to be differently attuned to that presented respectively by Duncan and Tickner. Even though both Vanessa Bell and Barbara Hepworth have been recognised as founder members of their artistic groups, still, their evaluation remained relatively secondary to that of their

<sup>20</sup> For a succinct sociological analysis of masculinity and domination see Pierre Bourdieu (2001) *Masculine Domination*, Cambridge, Polity Press. For a succinct overview of the use of the term avant-garde within modernism and an analysis of it, see David Cottingham (1998), esp. pp 49-53. For behavioral masculinity in the town of St Ives, see Stephens (1997). I am using here the term 'avant-garde' in a generic, double sense of relating both to stylistic claims as well as to organizational aspects.

<sup>21</sup> Carol Duncan (1993 (1973)) pp 81-108.

<sup>22</sup> Tickner (1992) pp 1-33.

male colleagues, and in the case of Vanessa secondary to her sister. Hepworth's positioning contains a double trope of difference for her gender and for being a sculptress,<sup>24</sup> that pointed towards her reception as being exotic for her exception of being a woman carver, and to the notion of feminine frailty (based on cultural perception as well as her physical appearance) defied by her physical act of carving.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, very little attention is directed at the phenomenon of feminization of male artists during and after the war. The gendering of practice – sculpture masculine; painting feminine, was applied only when framing Hepworth and not in that of male artists. It is in this context that the heroic verbal justificatory literature operates in rescuing reputation for male painters on professional as well as sexual levels, but fails to operate on similar lines for women artists. Thus gendering of artistic life and work operates in the first instance in a statistical inverted relationship between practitioners and attempts for their historicisation, as well as in a differential, gender specific established emplotments. The representation of painting as a feminine practice is only articulated as such in relation to women painters.

In addition to the systematic gendering distinction there is also in operation an asymmetrical gendered point of saturation. While, there seems to be a high ceiling of possible inclusion for 'significant' male artists, accepting 'significant' women artists rarely exceeds the one singled out woman artist.<sup>26</sup> Thus W. Nicholson, M. Mellis and W. Barns-Graham are pitched, if and when inserted into the history of 'St Ives', against two sets of distinction: on the one hand against a network of men painters, and on the other against one successful, exemplary

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<sup>23</sup> Catherine Deepwell (1991) *Women Artists in Britain Between the Two World Wars*, Birkbeck, University of London, unpublished Ph.D.

<sup>24</sup> A term Barbara Hepworth rejected preferring to be called a sculptor.

<sup>25</sup> For the relatively marginalized tone of criticism that Hepworth has been critically evaluated see Katy Deepwell (1996) 'Hepworth and her Critics' pp 75-94 and Penny Florence (1996) 'Barbara Hepworth: the Odd Man Out? Preliminary Thoughts about a Public Artist,' pp 23-42 both in *Barbara Hepworth Reconsidered* David Thistlewood (ed) Liverpool University Press and Tate Gallery Liverpool.

<sup>26</sup> I am excluding the Russian Modernist avant-garde from my discussion because of too many contextual and cultural differences to be added to such an analysis. However, it is fair to note that when they were exhibited in

woman artist who has already occupied in the artworld the single available space allocated for 'significant' woman artist. This numeric 'allocation' has implications beyond statistical observation, it generates different terms of analysis for women painters and their male counterparts; the first group is being essentialized by example and reductive discourse, the other group by being multiple in persons and in practice and forever individuated in the dominant art history writing.

### **Methodologies and methods an overview**

In addition to the overtly claimed classification of importance, I also consider the text for its implicit, semiotic connotations. Central to this analysis is the narrative genre of 'master and disciple' that when mapped unto gender is not a passing phase but presented as a fossilized eternal relational state. In the deconstruction of the 1985 event I am following Mike Bal's semiotic analysis of exhibition(s)<sup>27</sup> and conclude this reading with several observations relating to: the specific kind of bias that informed the construction of 'St Ives'; the inverted, gendered impact of generalisations on the evaluation of men and women artists; identifying the conflicts in the discourse between claims and evidence. Alongside the expansion and diversification of museums in the Western world, since 1980s came an increase in critical reading of museums.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, relatively little specific critical attention was directed at analyzing exhibitions. My semiotic reading of the 1985 exhibition depends mainly on

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the West together with their male colleagues, women artists were represented mainly with their design (usually for the stage) work and less with their paintings.

<sup>27</sup> Mieke Bal (1996) *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis*, New York and London, Routledge.

<sup>28</sup> See R. Lumley (1988) *The Museum Time Machine*, London, Comedia/Routledge, P. Vergo (ed) (1989) *The New Museology*, London, Reaktion. On the proliferation of heritage, esp. in Britain see D. Home (1984) *The Great Museum*, London, Pluto; D. Lowenthal (1985) *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; R. Hewison (1987) *The Heritage Industry*, London, Methuen. For art and social historical analysis in relation to museums see M. Wallace (1989) 'Mickey mouse history: portraying the past at Disney World' in W. Leon and R. Rosenzweig (eds.) *History Museums in the United States*, University of Illinois Press; D. Crimp (1985) *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge Mass, & London MIT Press; D. Sherman & I. Rogoff (eds.) (1994) *Museum Culture Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, London, Routledge; I. Karp, C. M. Kreamer and S.D. Lavine (eds.) (1992) *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, Washington and London, Smithsonian Institution Press; Macdonald, Sahron & Fyfe, Gordon (eds.) (1996) *Theorizing Museums*. Oxford, Blackwells.

Mieke Bal's *Double Exposures*<sup>29</sup> and to a lesser degree on James Herbert study of the 1937 Paris exhibition in historical, Marxist and semiotic readings.<sup>30</sup> Another, but a far lesser theoretical influence is Bruce Altshuler whose chronicling of the modernist avant-gardes exhibitions is interesting in the focus of looking at a chronology of landmark modernist exhibitions.<sup>31</sup> David Cottington in his study of Cubism distinguishes between cubisms, not in stylistic terms but in their strategic choices of preferred exhibiting space, salon or commercial galleries.<sup>32</sup> Equally important is Brian O'Doherty's analysis of the impact gallery space has on the reading of its meaning.<sup>33</sup> In a way, my study focuses on a range of considerations, all in relation to one seminal exhibition, in a similar structural ordering device as used by Gill Perry in framing her discussion on the women at the periphery of the Fauvists artists who emerged as an avant-garde after the 1905 exhibition<sup>34</sup> and that of Juliet Steyn and Lisa Tickner's discussion of the 1914 London's Whitechapel exhibition.<sup>35</sup>

The 'totalizing context' as a narrative device, is accompanied by certain over-emphases, which amount to being synecdochal in their rhetorical device or representation. This is most obvious in the way that story of 'St Ives' was punctuated by dramatizing few select 'significant event(s)' that are linked to the selected 'major figure(s)'.<sup>36</sup> The two are mutually nurturing and represent, I argue, what is specific to the Englishness of Artwriting in relation

<sup>29</sup> Mieke Bal (1996) op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> James Herbert (1998) *Paris 1937: Worlds on Exhibition*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press.

<sup>31</sup> Bruce Altshuler (1998) *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition; New Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press.

<sup>32</sup> D. Cottington (1998) *Cubism*, Movement in Modern Art Series, London, Tate Gallery Publication; Cottington, David (2002) 'The Formation of the Avant-Garde' in *The Avant-Garde again* Conference, University of Bristol, 23-24 March 2002.

<sup>33</sup> Brian O'Doherty (1999) *Inside the White Cube; The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Expanded Edition, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press.

<sup>34</sup> Perry (1999) following Oppler sees the event as a construct. See Oppler, Ellen (1976) *Fauvism Reexamined*, New York and London, Garland Publishing, p 214.

<sup>35</sup> See Lisa Tickner (2000) *Modern Life & Modern Subject*. In that context Juliet Steyn's (1994) study of the same exhibition 'Inside-Out: Assumptions of 'English' Modernism in the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London 1914' in Marcia Pointon (ed) *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology across England and America*, Manchester University Press, pp 212-30. An earlier version of it is 'Mods, Yids and Foreigners', *Third Text*, no. 15 Summer 1991, pp 29-38.

<sup>36</sup> For the selection of 'major figure(s)' see my discussion in Chapter 2.

to 'St Ives', which essentially is an uncritical reporting and repetition of the 'significant artists' statements, and total refusal to consider other often conflicting statements, mainly made by women artists, that disrupt the dominant story.<sup>37</sup> This state of affairs, begs to consider reputation management in relation to 'St Ives', both by the artists and their monographers, on the one hand and the process of information gathering and its assessment (as in the setting of interviews) on the other.

In chapter 2, but more so in chapters 3 and 4 my argument oscillates between two pairs of cultural oppositions: between structures versus active agents, and the biased way meaning and value are being ascribed. The latter looks at the gendered appraisal of artistic output, the former at the cultural economy of reputation management, which is in turn also coloured by perceptions of gender. Arguing these necessitates, I believe, a detailed empiricism that might at times verge on the anecdotal, but is nevertheless essential for setting out the specific facets of my study, out of which it is possible to draw some qualified conclusions. While writing up the research and study might be read as being driven by predetermined methods the absolute opposite is true. I began this project with the activist intention of retrieving women painters of the South West.<sup>38</sup> It was however, the process of research, interviews and constant reassessment that led at the end to the variety of methods employed. In a way I recognize the view that Yve-Alain Bois expressed in his determination to resist intellectual 'blackmail' pressures in order to allow the topic at hand determine the methods and

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<sup>37</sup> See the growth of the publication industry in modernism of 'artists' statements'. The valorization of these statements, is obviously feeding the publication frenzy and artists' statements represents a genre allocated a high proportion within the general category of primary sources. See for instance the compilation in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds.) (1992) *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford & Cambridge, Blackwell. More recently Kristine Stiles, & Peter Seltz, (eds.) (1996) *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Source book of Artists' Writings*. Berkeley, L.A., London, University of California Press.

<sup>38</sup> Curiously prompted by an invitation to present a paper in the conference 'Feminism & the Aesthetics of Difference', organized by Penny Florence, 8-9 September 1995, London, Institute of Romance Studies and Falmouth College of Arts.

theories he used.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, I allowed not so much the methods but the issues discussed to be determined by the topic and by my protagonists. Another point I share with Bois's method is the incorporation of various distinct so-called deconstructive theories combined with detailed empiricism for comparative consideration, in which the claims of the modernist material is being reversed to speak against itself, as, for instance, in his study 'Matisse and "Arche-drawing"'.<sup>40</sup>

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 I apply a 'cocktail', a synthesis of various feminist and sociological methodologies in aiming to answer the questions of restrictive appraisal of women painters. In the chapters dedicated to considering the women painters, Mellis (chapter 3) and Barns-Graham (chapter 4) I attend to two main issues: in what way do they belong to 'St Ives' and the meaning of their art, as an independent expression. Thus the emphasis is on their creativity, commitment to professionalism with only the barest, most essential consideration of their personal lives. Like them, there are many other modernist women artists whose work has at best been marginalized but more often omitted from *St Ives* altogether: Winifred Nicholson, Sandra Blow, Prunella Clough, Ithell Colquhoun, Thelma Hulbert, Rose Hilton, Mary Jewels, Janet Leach, Margo Maeckelsbegh and Marlow Moss – to name but a few whose assessment is long overdue.

In my discussion on Mellis and Barns-Graham my aim at listing their shared histories is to highlight that despite their shared native Scotland and education at Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) (fig 3), travelling and postgraduate scholarships, visits to France, and war years in Carbis Bay and St Ives, their art is all the same different. Each made different choices of lifestyle and above all artistic practices, and here the concept of 'disposition' as defined in

<sup>39</sup> Yve-Alain Bois (1993) 'Introduction: Resisting Blackmail' in *Painting as Model*, Cambridge Mass. And London, The MIT Press.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. pp 3-64.

Bourdieu's *habitus* is most clearly manifest. What are the strategic options available for modernist women painters at an age of postmodernism to reclaim their status by way of one-person exhibitions is the issue of the concluding chapter. In the last chapter I discuss various observations about structures of disadvantage that are operating as such only *vis a vis* women painters. And ask two questions what is there about old age that permits women painters to enter, still in relative marginal position, into the valorisation hierarchy and the second issue is the rhetorical question; do solo exhibitions of these women have the potential to redeem and reinstate their reputation to where it ought to be? I ask whether their recent solo exhibitions in national museums: *Margaret Mellis* (City Art Centre, Edinburgh, 1997) and *W. Barns-Graham retrospective 1940-1989*, City of (Edinburgh Museums and Art Galleries, 1989) as well as her *The Enduring Image*, (Tate St Ives, November 1999-April 2000) – have redressed their marginal positioning in the 1985 exhibition. These solo exhibitions offer a useful test-case study to assess how contesting narratives are being presented and their subsequent impact. More specifically, how are the women painters positioned in relation to categories of – Style (abstraction), professionalism (education, exhibiting history) residency (Penwith), activism (founder-member status) class, regional identity (Cornish, Scottish or English) and finally age – all of which merge in the construction of 'St Ives'. The relationship between the historical, 'factual', and the aesthetic assertions made in an exhibition is the uneasy marriage between historical empiricism and modernist perceptionism.<sup>41</sup> It is the tension between the explicit authoritative voice of the institution and the hidden assumptions of value.

### Intellectual postmodernism

Since the events of 1968 there has been a gradual increase in poststructuralist analysis, which impacted the Anglo-American academic syllabus fully only after translations of

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<sup>41</sup> I am using the term as Norman Bryson (1983) has defined it in *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*,



these texts were published and widely available. Roland Barthes' poststructuralist writings were translated into English in the early 1970s and became even more influential after his death in 1980. But for this study it would be interesting to think about the cultural atmosphere of the mid 1980s by reminding ourselves that both seminal texts: Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which is not One*<sup>42</sup> and Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report of Knowledge* appeared in English in 1985,<sup>43</sup> the same year as the 'St Ives' exhibition. The publication of the anthology *Postmodern Culture*, 1985 testifies the degree to which a new generation of Anglo-American intellectuals found critical theory and poststructuralism useful and fertile paradigms. The book, edited by Hal Foster debated the meanings of postmodernism and includes several seminal, if diverse interpretations of postmodernism such as Craig Owens's 'The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism', and Jürgen Habermas's 'Modernity – an Incomplete Project'.<sup>44</sup> Considering the 1985 *St Ives* exhibition from Owens's version of postmodernism renders the anachronism of 'St Ives' in acute terms of nostalgic desperation. However, if we accept Habermas's conviction that the modern project is still alive and has as yet to fulfil its promise than the exhibition can be read as attempting to do just this and its critique then has to shift to whether it does it successfully. So, the disjuncture between the contemporary intellectual poststructuralist literature and the voice of high modernism that the *St Ives* exhibition expresses can be understood not only in a single way but in several relativist configurations each dependant on the postmodernist stance from which it is being considered. Whichever way it is taken up there is no question that the way in which modernism has been revisited in modernist anachronistic terms at a time when postmodernist critics were making inroads in rethinking modernism as in Guibault's study of Abstract

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London, Macmillan Press.

<sup>42</sup> Luce Irigaray (1985) *This Sex Which is not One*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press.

<sup>43</sup> Jean-Francios, Lyotard (1984) *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester University Press.

Expressionism,<sup>45</sup> may either indicate how slow national galleries are to take on paradigmatic shifts, or else a deliberate nostalgic intention could be ascribed to them.

### Artistic practice and appraisal

How does then modernism feature in nostalgic postmodern culture? If the social conditions and sentiments are different, can a common denominator still be found in the nostalgia expressed in the period of the post war years? that of the 1985? Romy Golan locates nostalgia as a cultural expression of right wing nationalism in France during the inter wars years. Significantly, the historian David Cannadine wrote in 1985<sup>46</sup> about the exhibition of British Stately homes in similar vein. He sees the presentation of a highly selective and elitist kind of national British concept as presented in of the spectacular exhibition of *The Treasure Houses of Britain* in Washington.<sup>47</sup> This exhibition, like the construct of *St Ives* at the Tate Gallery, presents a refined rarefied national trait, presented with appeal to opulence and Arcadian state of being, wrapped up in a manner designed to appeal to sentimental escapism and economic boost to tourism.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Cannadine's exposure of the discrepancy between the exhibition's claim and the reality of upper class life<sup>49</sup> can be equally applied, I argue, to 'St Ives' and St Ives. The nostalgic representation of landscape in the 1985 exhibition can thus be seen as either an expression of a desperate regressive nostalgic social order, or else as desperately clinging to a traditional, old but comforting fantasy of landscape, which addresses it at a scale of the personal experience, rather than the

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<sup>44</sup> Hal Foster (ed) (1985 (1983)) *Postmodern Culture*, Broughton Gifford, Pluto Classics that included Owens, pp 65-90, and Habermas 3-15. Also, Scott Lash (1985) 'Postmodernity and desire', *Theory and Society*, 14, pp 1-33.

<sup>45</sup> Serge Guilbaut (1983) *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, (trans. Artur Goldhammer), Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

<sup>46</sup> David Cannadine (1989) 'Nostalgia', in *The Pleasure of the Past*, Penguin Books, pp 256-270.

<sup>47</sup> National Gallery of Art, Washington, *The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Collecting*, 3 November 1985 to 16 March 1986.

<sup>48</sup> See Cannadine (1989) detailed discussion about the nostalgic opulence and heroic presentation of the exhibition, pp 260-264, and his statement: "The distinctions between patronage and collecting, between functional and decorative art, seem inadequately made and explored. The exhibits are assigned their chronological places in rather an inconsistent way: some by date of acquisition, others by date of completion." p 264.

terrifying realism of the magnitude of corporate interventions with landscape since the 1950s economic boom. Despite the modernist agenda of narrating the landscape, these two different views are not mutually excluding and co-exist in the implicit texts of the exhibition and its catalogue. Ironically, unintentionally, this conflict of messages speaks despite itself in a postmodern ambivalence and pluralism. While nostalgia implies a sentiment and a deliberate expression of it, anachronism connotes less intentionality and is more a sign of being out of step with one's time.

Anachronism is a practice a framing device that supports sentiments of nostalgia. Abstract and landscape are the two artistic expressions used as tropes in the rhetoric of 'St Ives'. While abstraction, by the mid 1980s was seen as *the* stylistic sign of passé modernism, landscape, curiously, was being redefined in the collective imagination at a time of increased globalisation.<sup>50</sup> And yet, the text of the 1985 'St Ives' exhibition both fails to reflect these synchronic and diachronic differences and conflate the two. During and immediately after the Second World War the depiction of landscape represented an anxiety of loss and a relief when the threat was over. This sentiment was both one of personal experiential dimensions as well as symbolic. The former expressed the joy of restricted access to the countryside, which was rigorously maintained during the war years.<sup>51</sup> The other expression was of nationalist sentiment applied to this England that just has escaped the threat of destruction. During the 1980s a completely different meaning and relationship to the landscape was dominant in Britain. Stressful urban life and sense of alienation from primordial attachments<sup>52</sup> made the countryside a space of 'nature' to escape to, both as a personal

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p 266.

<sup>50</sup> See David Harvey (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity, An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, for his thesis of the shrinking of the dimensions of space and time in Postmodernism.

<sup>51</sup> There were in excess of 60 deaths of British citizens by the National Guards of people who were found in countryside and suspected to be German spies. BBC3 programme 19.3.2001.

<sup>52</sup> As defined by the social-anthropologist Edward Shail.

retreat and rehabilitation, as well as following the new arguments and activism of the Environmental movement.<sup>53</sup>

These sentiments towards the landscape had their artistic specific manifestations. Both Barns-Graham and Mellis were trained to keep drawing from life, portraits, figures, landscapes or still-lives. During the war years, Barns-Graham found that her training as a portraitist had its remunerations, but free access to the landscape she recalls has been difficult and restricted.<sup>54</sup> It is possible to extrapolate from their memories and explain the duality in Ben Nicholson and Hepworth's stylistic approaches after the war years. It was, I would posit, a clash between adhering to a stylistic motto in conflict with personal, experiential expression.

A shift towards a new attitude in landscape representation has evolved since the 1970s and its depiction has hence carried different connotations in the 1980s from those it had during the 1940s and 50s. The increased global outlook has modified the sense of local into directions of self-reflexive examination of identities, both in terms of affirmation as well as rejection. The environmental movement revived both romantic sentiments towards landscape, alongside hard-hitting scientific critique of the enlightenment's promise of progress. Equally influential were the images of the earth beamed down from satellites. Viewed from a new aerial perspective, gone were the traditional notions that related to embodied vision, with its horizontal and verticals, determined by the body in relation to gravity, or the earth's surface. Both these postmodern attitudes – environmentalism and space exploration - transcend the old notions of nationalism and depict a new ontological

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<sup>53</sup> The popularity of the term 'The Good life', whether used cynically or descriptively, indicates the presence of another kind of life, that was not considered to be as good.

<sup>54</sup> Both Mellis and Barns-Graham recall the difficulty of being denied drawing in the landscape during the war. Walking in the countryside was limited to a radius of 5 miles, and if one wanted to sketch outdoors, a special permit was needed. The same was also claimed by Miriam Gabo in interview with D. Lewis and S. Fox-Pitt 1981 TAV.

awareness. The new imaging of landscape has defined itself in a double contradictory attitude towards the humanistic mode of spatial pictorial depiction<sup>55</sup> dominant in the West since Alberti's.<sup>56</sup>

While the cubist spatial depiction denied Albertian single viewing point, it attempted to heighten realism, the truth-value of the depiction in concert with concept and memory. By contrast, the images beamed back from space photography, while technically, cameras were designed to follow the single viewing point, and the images beamed back from the spacecrafts offered yet a different truth. The emotional response they evoked shifted from a personal experience to that of a god-like view, from the gaze to panoramic view, from tactile humanism to detached ocularism. With the perception of the globe from a god-like vintage point transposed the human gaze also into a holistic imaging of the *globe*, not of boundaries of countries, or other divisions. A paradigmatic shift of perception took place and with it came also a perception of loneliness and isolation. Concurrent with this other technological changes took place. In 1985, the year of the exhibition *St Ives* celebrated nostalgically English modernism the first computer graphics animated film *Money for Nothing* was made. How, if at all, do these events relate?

In the 1980s the patriarchal perception of landscape as nurturing mother earth, took on an additional connotation of a lonely planet that gave rise to the paternal sentiments of humanity's sense of responsibility to take on a guardian role to protect it. The rise of Land Art that gathered momentum during the 1980s is both an expression of this new

<sup>55</sup> John White (1967) *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*, p 122; Erwin Panofsky (1964) 'Perspective as Symbolic Form' in *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*, Berlin, pp101,123; Svetlana Alpers () *Art of Describing*, pp 72-119; Irit Rogoff, 2000, 'Mapping' pp 73-111.

<sup>56</sup> See Alberti (1972) *De Pittura*, Book 1, 5-20 ed. Grayson, London, Phaidon pp 39-57. Also Joan Gadol (1969) *Leon Battista Alberti: Universal man of the Early Renaissance*, Chicago, London, University of Chicago Press.

environmental sensibility and an artistic expression to this new, cosmological outlook.<sup>57</sup> The locations sought by land artists are of a completely different nature from that of the romantic escapism that the *St Ives* scenario offers. As evident in the land art works of artists who increasingly were influenced by environmental awareness their commitment to landscape in the 1980s sought out completely different rural location from those presented by the *St Ives* artists. For instance, from 1982- to 1985 Hanson photographed a large coal strip-mine at Colstrip, Montana, along with its neighbouring power plant and factory, where blasting is done with explosives that remove coal from the lower layers of subsoil by an eight-million-pound walking dragline, the size of a large office building.<sup>58</sup> In Hanson's 1984 aerial photographs of Minuteman missiles silos in the American West anti multinationalist capitalism, activist environmentalism protest combined in making his political artistic statement.<sup>59</sup> Thus, by 1985 both the technologies of representation, as well as the sensibilities to the old genres were altered, a fact that further stresses the degree of anachronism of the 1985 exhibition.

Primitivism, or primordial and elemental expressions appear to be the expressive constant in the practice of 'St Ives' rather than the frequent claims made for either landscape or abstraction. Its earliest manifestations were in the early 1920's in the collaborative work of Winifred and Ben Nicholson, and then joined by Christopher Wood. In 1926 Ben and Winifred spent time in Paris visiting Cedric Morris,<sup>60</sup> the primitivizing artist who lived in Newlyn and who claimed to have collected Wallis's painting prior to the latter's 'discovery' by Ben and Christopher Wood. Wallis stood for a cluster of notions associated with the

<sup>57</sup> For postcolonialism see Spivak 'The *Intervention Interview*' paper presented in the Conference on Cultural construction of Race, in the University of Sydney, Australia; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1990) in Sarah Harasym (ed) *The Post-Colonial Critic*, NY and London, Routledge.

<sup>58</sup> Suzi Gablik (1991) *The Reenchantment of Art*, Thames and Hudson, p 80.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Also, "From 1985 to 1986, at some peril to his own health, Hanson, who lives in Providence and teaches at the Rhode Island School of Design, produced *Waste Land*, an aerial study of hazardous waste sites throughout the United States." p78.

<sup>60</sup> Kettle's Yard File Ben Nicholson, 1 letter 1.

concept of Primitivism: from deliberate anti-academic stance in practicing primitive modes of depictions is shifted to spontaneity of expression of which Alfred Wallis was indexical, as well as the elemental connotation of 'direct carving' doubled by the manual, laboured element in scraping the work's surface. The scraping of the surface, can be read as a parallel to what was seen in Penwith as the work of nature on the land's surface, a reading that renders the relationship of landscape and non-figurative paintings as dialectical rather than one of dichotomy. It is within this concept that the mature work of the women painters of 'St Ives' needs to be interpreted.

Winifred Nicholson's art always addressed the issue of light in painting; as a student she followed the pre-Raphaelite colour harmonies; her visit to India and Burma in 1914 introduced her to different cultural conventions, and symbolic meanings (fig 4), which she in turn translated into a depiction of English landscape painted in extra-European or Gauguin-inspired colour harmonies (fig 36). Through the combination of Christian Science belief and her Indian experience, she sought the symbolic meaning as much as the aesthetic experience in representing light through colour as in one of her last paintings, *Sunroom*, 1980 (fig 5). Despite the sixty one years that separated the two experiences and paintings, in her written comments she collapsed places and time into one theme, namely into that of light as she experienced it "the time at Eigg was a glimpse through and so was a time I had with Ben at Lugano and a time I once had in Paris with myself."<sup>61</sup> In the 1930s during her stay in Paris, she painted geometric abstractions that were either simplifications of plants or of ideas of light transposed to colours (figs 5, 11). Margaret Mellis's ultimate expressive interest is to abridge nature and culture, time and space, distances in her constructions, as in *Sea*, 1991 (fig 6) and Wilhelmina Barns-Graham whose work during the decade of 1990s is an

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<sup>61</sup> In a letter to Kathleen date not known suggested date 1958, but could be later, quoted from A. Nicholson (1987) p 206.

expression of unbridled freedom and joy of being able to wield the brush and make marks (fig 7) and marvel at beauty even as it passes in front our field of vision and possibly disappearing as it moves along and away from frame to frame.

## **B. Historiography and data in the gendering of 'St Ives'**

Inconsistencies in the information that I have gathered initially presented me with the need of rethinking my methods as well as methodologies. The issue was how could I substantiate my intervention of 'St Ives' and redressing the established narrative if the methods I was intent on using are replicating those I was questioning. What emerged was that no interview, others or mine, expresses factual truth about the past, without being tinged by contextual conditions of what preoccupies the artist at the moment of being interviewed. These contextual conditions range from the general sense of octogenarian artists that time given up to academic researcher inevitably reduce the time they could be in the studio working; a perception of artists that academic writing is of lesser impact on the effective positioning of the artists in terms of exhibitions and sells; much of the initial information imparted in interviews was well rehearsed rather than addressing my specific questions; and finally, interviews became for artists time in which they could express their most recent grievances with the art world and their public reception. I therefore had to reconsider my methods in order to have access not only to information that the interviewed artist brings up and deems as important but also to my own methodological queries. For that purpose I searched for an analytical text about interviewing artists. To my surprise I could not find any such literature within the discipline of art history and had to rely on the rich and detailed material that exists in the social sciences of ethnology, sociology and anthropology, and to adapt it to the specific conditions I have initially experienced when interviewing artists.



In this section I record how I adapted the sociological methods to interviewing *artists* and my adjustments to assessing the status of such interviews. As an integral part of this process was to go back to other earlier recorded interviews that served the writing of the dominant history of 'St Ives' and foreground their contexts in equally critical consideration.

### **Data gathering**

Data gathering is the general initial method of familiarising the researcher with the topic being researched. It is a general, all encompassing term. Already at the early stages of my research, when I read *St Ives* exhibition catalogue explicit and implicit critical categories of discourse emerged as defining and framing 'St Ives'. At that stage my intention was to find within the exhibition catalogue internal contradictions – a topic which I elaborate in Chapter 2 – but another probably more significant aspect for the issue of data gathering was the relationship between the published material and the material that was left unpublished in archives. Thus discrepancies exist within two kinds of relationships of material, first, internal to the public text, and secondly external to it, in what was left out from the published, dominant narrative. My method and methodology at that stage was to read *St Ives* against itself, and following that to relativize its histories.<sup>62</sup> An even further proliferation of narratives emerged during my interviews with artists, curators and contributors to the catalogue of 1985.

The existence of several alternative narratives foregrounded the issue of selection and even more importantly the question of verification in the discipline of art history in general and in the English history of 'St Ives' in particular. As it seemed logical to assume that any

narrative could be claimed to be partial and incomplete, I had to clarify to what extent my project will take on a role of arbitration, when will it be used to unsettle received histories and their bias and when to offer an intervention, an additional facet to the already established constructions. For that purpose, my data gathering has been a dialectical process of interviewing, archival search, and in-depth reading of the *St Ives* catalogue and weighing the data from all the sources against each other.

### Archival reading

Without being given a full access to the personal archives of W. Barns-Graham and M. Mellis I had to consult other, mainly public and private archives. The public ones are: Tate Gallery Archive, London (TA); Kettle's Yard (KY), Cambridge; and Peter Lanyon Archive, Newlyn (PLA). Thus, with the withholding of personal archives an ironical situation of inverse relationship was established between the readily access offered by the 'expository agency' of The Tate Gallery, in contrast to the silence of the 'speaking subject' of my study – the artists themselves.<sup>63</sup>

The single most important document to inform my deconstruction of *St Ives* – exhibition and catalogue – texts was the 1981 extensive body of recorded and transcribed interviews conducted by David Lewis and Sarah Fox-Pitt, with the intention, at the time, of a comprehensive publication to accompany the forthcoming exhibition.<sup>64</sup> The material drew my attention to several issues: the informal mood in which these interviews were conducted; the controlling and guiding role of the interviewers; the different meanings imparted by

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<sup>62</sup> Yve-Alain Bois (1993) 'Matisse and "Arche-drawing"' in *Painting As a Model*, Cambridge Mass. and London, The MIT Press, pp 3-64 coins 'Self-blindness' the way in which Matisse's art and writing are testimony against his intentions and self-positioning.

<sup>63</sup> For a sociological consideration of feminists interviewing non-feminist women see Donna Luff (1999) 'Dialogue across the divides: moments of rapport' and power in feminist research with anti-feminist women'. *Sociology* Vol.33, no.4. November 1999, pp 607-703.

voice recording and their transcripts; the interviewers and editors bias of interest. In addition to tone of voice the recordings also retain a clear reflection of either reverence or irreverence to the interviewee discussion by way of either encouragement to go on or interruptions. In most cases these two different approaches are related to the gender of the artist, with more interruptions when interviewing women artists.

The loss of information in the process of 'transposition' from a spoken to written documents became both a theoretical and a symbolic issue of bias and marginalizations that besets Artwriting even when it is not intended. Thus, there is a two-tiered kind of selectivity in operation: that occurring in the interview setting and the subsequent selection of material deemed to be relevant. A different power dynamics between interviewer and interviewee emerged from the 1981 recordings of women artists and men. Most of the questions asked were closed and pre-empting questions, and answers that lead to different issues were ignored. Not only were women being incessantly interrupted, the interruption usually occurred when they discussed either their own work or imparted information contradicting the preconceived notion of the interviewers. For my research purposes these silenced comments were the most frustrating loss of vital information.

There is a marked difference in the modes of self-presentation of the interviewers to the artists. David Lewis self-presentation was one of a friend calling on the artist to recollect jointly the old times. Sara Fox-Pitt, by contrast, took a less active role and her interventions, questions and comments were made with a due professional distance. All these brought about a reflexive thinking about the *process* of interview, in general and of artists, or women artists in particular.

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<sup>64</sup> The idea of the book did not materialize, and instead David Lewis wrote A Personal Memoir, the main article for the exhibition catalogue of *St Ives* (1985) pp 13-41.

### The status of primary sources

Interviews and archival documents, being classed as primary sources, have a special prestigious status in empirical research. In most cases, the artists' statements are accepted as factual. It seems though that there is a hierarchical difference in accepting as factual aural and written information. Stephens for instance, in the preface to his Ph.D. thesis, is alert to the need to treat with caution the information he gathered from artists, as memories are not reliable.<sup>65</sup> But significantly, there is no similar note of caution when he discusses consulting archival material. Tacitly, written documents are perceived to be factual. Stephens and indeed other historians' uncritical acceptance of archival documents, as if by virtue of being *written* has privileged these and detached them from the doubts otherwise applied to human agency.

### Interviews – a critique

Nowhere in the 1981 tapes, their transcriptions, as in all art historical interviews, is there an indication of the interview setting. The questions as already mentioned above, were not of explorative nature but of confirmative one that revisited the well-established configuration of 'St Ives'.<sup>66</sup> David Lewis's 'Memoir' in *St Ives* 1985 is somewhat of a misnomer for it is more of a factitious nature.<sup>67</sup> For instance, writing about Gabo in personal, experiential terms, while Gabo had already left for the USA in 1946, prior to Lewis's arrival at St Ives. Thus, Gabo features not as part of Lewis's memories, but for the mythic position that he commands. By contrast, neither Lewis's privileged entrée to the art world of St Ives by virtue of being Barns-Graham's husband, nor her art, to which he has had intimate access,

<sup>65</sup> Christopher Stephens (1996) writes: "I have tried to discern patterns and trends in the events and art already recorded." My emphasis p.4. There is of course the problem of differential records as that of Peter Davies (1994) who Stephens decides to ignore for the surprising reason that it offers an alternative, 'lost' artists of 'St.Ives'.

<sup>66</sup> Women artists' statements about their art were not included in the final text.

<sup>67</sup> David Lewis (1985), 'St. Ives: A Personal Memoir 1947-1955,' in *St. Ives 1939-64*, pp.13-41.

are being critically reflected in the text. Lewis's emphasis on the mythic aspects of 'St Ives' undermines his claim of the narration being that of an 'eye witness'. As Bal argues such device operates on the seduction through its appeal to and claim of realism.<sup>68</sup>

Contrary to my initial expectations, archival reading –mainly that of personal letters and of the minutes of PSAC - revealed not so much about the artists' work and ideas as the degree to which artists' time and energy were invested in 'extra-studio' activities.<sup>69</sup> The main content of the personal letters as well as the minutes of PSAC are concerned with planning strategic manoeuvring and of administrative and organisational nature. In this light, David Lewis's disclaimer that none of them realized they were living in historical times, reads as most ingenious.<sup>70</sup> My experiences of archival research lead me to questioning how information publicised was attained, and what were, if at all, the procedures of interviewing in Artwriting.

### **Interviews in Art history and sociology – a comparison**

All methods of data gathering belong to one of the following three categories: questioning, observing behaviour, or examining written records. The choice any one or combination of methods depends largely on the theoretical framework and its methodological focus. The most debated issue in recent changes of approaches to verification or rather what elements should be included in the consideration of an overall factual claim. Grounded Theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss in the early 1960s, offers both an open structured as well as accountable method to qualitative analysis.<sup>71</sup> Its methodological trust to qualitative data is

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<sup>68</sup> Bal (1996) p 8.

<sup>69</sup> It is in this respect that it is difficult to accept Lewis's claim that they did not know they were making history. Their activities, notwithstanding Lewis's employment as the secretary of PSAC and of Hepworth, were all directed as were all others' to make that time historically significant.

<sup>70</sup> David Lewis was the first paid secretary of PSAC discussed on 7 Feb 1950 Minutes book p 49.

<sup>71</sup> Glaser and Strauss have formalized Grounded Theory by reviving the tradition of Chicago Sociology, from the 1920s through the mid 50s, and by expanding it Anselm Strauss (1988) *Qualitative Analysis For Social*

“toward the development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research, or theoretical interests.”<sup>72</sup> Grounded Theory advocated open-ended methods of data gathering which perceived the interviewer as a participant observer, more active than just a recording agent of the information in the field. In addition, the method does not only rely on verbal information, but also on the specifics of the setting, turn of voice and body language as contributors for the data and its eventual interpretation. After my somewhat unsuccessful initial interviews and listening to recorded interviews made by earlier research I decided that the reflexive but open ended qualities of Grounded Theory of participant researcher suited my purpose. On the aspect of the requirement of the interviewer’s distance from any theoretical interest I diverted from the method. For me theory and practice are intertwined and the methods used in practice are employed as a direct result of the theoretical framework of the researcher.<sup>73</sup>

In a structured interview the researcher introduces a predetermined approach and topics as questions to be addressed. In these situations there is a limited scope for the interviewee to introduce her or his concerns, if the presented questions do not allow for it. In the social sciences the benefits of empowering the respondents as authors of categorization are being weighed carefully against the benefits of a strict questioning method. When applying these considerations to interviewing artists-informants the issues of setting of the interview as well as power relationship between interviewer and respondent are of different dynamics. Interviewing artists is usually an open-ended event, but unlike in the social sciences neither the setting nor other non-verbal expressions are brought into the final analysis of the interview. The fears in ethnography that an unstructured interview “may be a reduction in

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*Science*, NY, Cambridge University Press, pp 5-7. See also Anselem L. Strauss (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p 5.

<sup>73</sup> For detailed sociological survey on the relationship between theory and methods see David Silverman (1985) *Qualitative Methodology and Society* Gower. Chapter 8, pp 156-177.

control and consequently in reliability”,<sup>74</sup> relate to regulatory requirements of a broad market assessment or the like, but is less of significance when interviewing individual artists. In this instance, with specific interest in a particular artist gathering data through unstructured interviews maintains a clear link between method and theory. It still leaves unaccountable the issue of legitimating the validity of the statements.

A wide range of legitimating explanations co-exist in recent theorising within art history. As Gregg Horowitz has argued there is a range of possible “explications of the concepts of style” differences that are crucial in art history as they determine what

...will count as a legitimate explanation of an art work. Richard Wollheim on his part, for example, takes the style of an art work to be explicable only in the strictest intentional manner, whereas Theodor Adorno takes it to be explicable in the strictest anti-intentionalist manner; between these two extremes can be arranged the spectrum of historiographical techniques.<sup>75</sup>

The spectrum is wide but within the realm of the work of art not about the artists’ utterances and statements.

### **Interview - theoretical approaches**

The ethnomethodological literature of social sciences stresses the power relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer is assumed to be in control even when assuming the position of participant observer. The interviewer, the questioner, is the symbolic inquisitioner rather than inquirer.<sup>76</sup> This abstract notion is severely altered in situations where experienced artists who have a keen awareness of their self-worth or might be reluctant to either grant an interview or spend too much time on it.

<sup>74</sup> Marten Shipman (ed) (1981) *The Limitation of Social Research*, London, NY, Longman, p 95.

<sup>75</sup> Gregg Horowitz (1993) ‘Objectivity and valuation in contemporary art history’ pp127-145 in *Explanation and Value in the Arts*. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (eds) Cambridge University Press, p 144.

<sup>76</sup> Such notions are naturalized in the sociological literature as well as being addressed as in Rosalind Edwards and Jane Ribbens (1998) ‘Feminist dilemmas in qualitative research’ “However hard the researcher tries to position herself within the marginalized culture, she faces a dilemma. As long as she is seeking to be heard by a public academic audience, she cannot evade the necessity to interpret the worlds and understandings of the Other into a discourse or knowledge form that can be understood and accepted within the dominant Western

Within positivist sociological literature systems have been devised with the aim of reaching an unbiased uniformity of the interview setting and questions and thus rendering them as accountable. Interview is a verbal international exchange “in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or belief from another person or persons.”<sup>77</sup> Johan Galtung constructed an elaborate system to ensure that it will obtain ‘reliable, consistent data’ in a search for a consistent result.<sup>78</sup> Goode and Hatt express the same rigorous view: “when answers are different it throws into question the adequacy of the data.”<sup>79</sup> The theory of non-structured interviewing methods came about in reaction to the positivism which upheld the rigorous system for their statistical verification value rather than permitting free responses of the respondents. The vast literature where these issues are being debated in the social sciences is in stark contrast to the absence in art history of *any* theorizing the context of the ‘interview’ setting.

Art history *uses* an interview with artists as axiomatic. Usually statements by artists (male) are quoted and repeated as evidence for truth. In that sense it is an extreme form of the non-structured interview upheld by the promoters of Grounded Theory. For it offers a complex paradigm from which the interview as well as the information provide material for hypothesis and interpretation of positioning rather than axiomatic. In a succinct definition of Grounded Theory Anselm Strauss writes that:

The methodological thrust of the grounded theory approach to qualitative data is toward the development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research, or theoretical interests. So, it is not really a specific method or technique. Rather, it is a style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinct features, such as theoretical sampling, and

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frameworks of knowledge and culture”, in their *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*, London, Sage, p 3.

<sup>77</sup> F.N.Maccoby, E.& Maccoby, N. (1954) 'The Interview: A Tool of Social Science' In G. Lindzey (ed) *Handbook of Social Psychology*, vol. I. Cambridge, Mass, Addison-Wesley, pp 449-487.

<sup>78</sup> Johan Galtung, 'Data Collection' in Kenneth Thompson & Jeremy Tunstall (eds) *Sociological Perspectives* ((1971)1973) OU, Penguin, pp 518-541.

<sup>79</sup> William J.Goode & Paul Hatt (1952)*Methods in Social Research*, McGraw-Hill Book Comp.,USA, p 186.



certain methodological guidelines, such as the making of constant comparisons and the use of coding paradigm, to ensure conceptual development and density.<sup>80</sup>

Grounded Theory provides a method that accommodates empirical research without restricting methodological interests of the researcher as well as permitting the material gleaned through interview to dictate 'core categories' as a result of the insistence on coding the notes after the interviews in order to identify these.<sup>81</sup> However, my commitment to deconstructive and feminist intervention makes it impossible to accept the dictate of Grounded Theory from interviewers to remain "without any particular commitment to specific kinds of ...theoretical interests". Instead I persisted with my methodological impetus and I attempted to identify and interpret 'core categories' in a non-structured exchange situations. This method enabled me to ensure situations and settings in which women artists' expressed their own perception of what they considered to be significant issues. In this feminist respect I aimed to reverse the traditional positions allocated to women respondents in which male artists information was the material that constituted 'history' while women's information was considered to be 'gossip'.<sup>82</sup>

### **Interviewing artists**

At the early stages of the research I embarked on an intensive schedule of interviews with the artists: Margaret Mellis, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Rose Hilton, Sandra Blow, Gillian Ayres, Katherine Armstrong, Ann Stokes, Margo Maeckelberghe, Patrick Heron and Terry Frost. I also interviewed relatives of artists most importantly Andrew Nicholson, Winifred and Ben's son and editor of her collected writings *Unknown Colour*; Sheila Lanyon the widow of Peter Lanyon as well as museum officials David Brown, Alan Bowness, and Mike Tooby. At the advanced stages more detailed meetings and discussions mainly with Wilhelmina Barns-Graham and Margaret Mellis replaced these 'blanket' interviews. With

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<sup>80</sup> Anselm Strauss (1988) *Qualitative Analysis For Social Science*, NY, Cambridge University Press, p 5.

the early stage my intention was to gather what I then perceived as 'the still available living memory'. It was a method that paralleled that of Stephens's attempts of retrieval and extensive interviews plans with what he terms as 'eye-witness' accounts.<sup>83</sup> At the later stages, I used a non-structured interviewing method, in a setting in which I became a frequent visitor/friend of the artists.

Matters and discussions during my interviews of women artists made me realize that arriving with set questions for them to address ended up with less rich material and predictable responses. It was the comments that were made as asides that revealed more about the complex conditions of modernist women artists. For instance, during my first interview with Rose Hilton whatever she seemed to be intent on discussing her deceased husband, Roger Hilton rather than her own work.<sup>84</sup> In response to my question why she did that she said that it was a habit, since most interviewers wish to know about him rather than her. But to counter this mild criticism she hastened to stress that in a pragmatic way it was his reputation after all that kept her and their two sons in comfortable living.<sup>85</sup> Since then she has become feted and her own works sells well. She has also changed her attitude towards her own work, travels and gives talks about her painting with a strong feminist slant. The anecdote indicates to what degree the data given during an interview is determined by the positioning that the artist, informant, feels would be strategically best at the time it is being delivered as well as changes in her conditions. Information therefore has to be thought of as being conditioned by current events rather than factual. Similarly, initially, Margaret Mellis preferred to discuss the collages of Francis Davison, her second husband, and gave me the

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<sup>81</sup> For detailed exposition of these, see *ibid.* pp 26-35; 50-108.

<sup>82</sup> Whitney Chadwick (1985) *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, Thames and Hudson, p 6.

<sup>83</sup> Stephens (1997) p 3.

<sup>84</sup> Summer 1996.

<sup>85</sup> An attitude of economic and artistic appreciation that was expressed also in similar way by Sheila Lanyon. Both women recognize their economic dependency on the continuous and careful management of their husbands' acclaim.

same reasons as Rose Hilton did, for a deep respect for his art and memory and for the reason that more collectors still are purchasing his artwork than hers. Upholding of the symbolic capital of a deceased husband artist, has to be taken as one of economic interest that can only be reduced when the professional standing of the woman artist becomes secure.

Two aspects of the interview setting relating to power and subjectivity have been at odds on one hand with my methodological intentions and the other with the ethnographic literature about interview setting. The first is the occasional disagreement between my interpretative views and those of the artists, who in varying degrees objected to being discussed together since they thought of it as a sub-category for being women.<sup>86</sup> It is a reaction that springs from two elements: their historical experience of how much gender is a devaluing category, as well as a more general refusal of being categorized, or as they say 'pigeon-holed', in any other way or manner. Given the dilemma arising from this conflict of interpretation and my wish to make their voice heard, I had to settle by way of giving their views as well as mine, and attempted to keep the two as clearly defined as possible when there was a difference of opinions.

The issue of what is termed the power relationship between interviewer and informant in an interview setting needed adjusting from sociological articulations to the specificity of interviewing artists. The ethnographic literature consistently assumes that the interviewer, despite needing her respondents, is in a position of power that needs to be efficiently concealed from interfering in the process of data gathering. My experience with interviewing artists is that the power relationship is reversed to that described in the social sciences literature. For in the artists' view, academic research features very low in their scale of interest, unlike other interviews of more immediate promotional benefits such as journalistic,

museal, or even monographic books. While I have enjoyed endless generosity of time and hospitality, there is no question that being a researcher - who interviews a successful artist - there is an inverted power relationship to that claimed in the texts. Artists were open in expressing, especially being of mature age, that their priorities in using their limited energies lies with working in the studio rather than granting researchers time for interviews.

An additional predicament that I found myself in was that I had no access to their documents beyond the information that Mellis and Barns-Graham were willing to discuss with me. The issue was not so much one of verification as attempting to understand their conditions of art making, for in a true artistic involvement both preferred to discuss their current work and concerns rather than the past. That resistance could not be attributed to their age but rather to artistic preference, as both despite being octogenarians can reliably recall their past and events. However, age seemed to be also a part of that reluctance, as discussing the past seemed to drain Barns-Graham. She repeatedly stated on such occasions, that how painful it is for her to have to re-live the past for she has to recall many of her friends and colleagues who have deceased, which not only made her sad but also feeling lonely. Thus, age of the artist impacted the interview not for lack of memory, but for the emotional demands that recalling the past imposes as well as the issue of energy and time management.<sup>87</sup>

Half way through my research I embarked on a different method of data gathering. Initially I informed the artists in advance what the topic of interview would be. During that stage Barns-Graham met me with a prepared written text and read it out to me. While it was both informative and interesting it was carefully composed with the obvious intention of imparting only aspects that she wished me to channel into my writing. In addition, during

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<sup>86</sup> See similar objection by Meret Oppenheim in Whitney Chadwick (1985) op. cit. p 12.

questions of interviews it transpired that artists, unlike most other interviewees, are experienced in giving interviews, and in the art of self-positioning. Thus, the artist's main interest in the interview is in using it as an opportunity both for self-promotion and for settling old or current scores. There was no spontaneity or new frank disclosure in these settings as being pre-warned enabled the artists to focus on the issue but also to give thought to either over-emphases or concealments of aspects they did not wish to discuss. To sum up, the inverted power relationship, the use of the interview by artists for their own ends, and the refusal to discuss in new terms the past have been a stumbling block for some time that I had to overcome by rethinking my methods.

### **From interviews to conversations**

As I became more familiar with the artists, I decided to change my approach to a non-structured setting by taking on the role of a participant observer. Rather than set time and topic for interviews I turn the time together into a casual conversation during which we might have been doing other things, such as driving around St Ives, swimming with Margaret Mellis, cooking supper, shopping, having a meal or anything else. This, surprisingly, did yield more information, and had been conducted in a grey area of between friendship and interview.<sup>87</sup> Wilhelmina Barns-Graham's awareness of this oscillated from indifference to alarm during which she would exclaim in a self-censoring comment, "I forget that you are writing about these things! I shouldn't tell you this."

The non-structured interviewing method had new advantages and disadvantages. The most significant advantage was that its openness enabled the artists to talk about *their*

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<sup>87</sup> This trend was more clearly expressed by Barns-Graham and can be a matter of personality as well as an outcome of my more intensive and frequent visits to her in St Ives' studio.

<sup>88</sup> The difference in kind of discussion during a structured interview and non-structured one also emerges in the 1981 tapes of Lewis. At the resuming of recording after lunch he often remarks about the different

preoccupation rather than responding to mine. It offered me a better understanding of the person each of the artists is, and through that have insight into new possible reading of their art. It also introduced a sense of spontaneity and frankness to the conversation that was absent from the interview setting. The disadvantages were that my note taking had to rely on memory and only approximate their wording. With the shift of our interaction from purely professional to a 'friendship mode' there was also an ethical question of what is fair to disclose and incorporate in the thesis. Barns-Graham, is always alert to the free use interviewers are liable to make of the information, and treats interviews and conversation with a great amount of suspicion and wish of control. This kind of reaction of hers might be superficially interpreted as paranoia, a favourite gendered reaction to women's claims when wishing not to address them as worth considering. This pathologizing reaction ignores the fact that Barns-Graham and other women artists' attitude is not inherent but a reaction to a life-long experience of being misrepresented. By attributing behavioural disorders to a reaction, essentialism is combined with reversed chronology as discussed in Bal and Bryson.

### **Whose voice?**

Contrary to Foucault's assertion that there is an intrinsic link between power and knowledge<sup>89</sup>, in the case of 'St Ives' knowledge without the equation of gender or access to institutional power has proved to be impotent. Furthermore, I would even posit that the very existence of several contesting versions opens up a field wherein different modes and strategies of struggle for dominance are in operation, rather than being rationally and critically examined have prompted gendered personalised belittling perception of women's (or their supportive friends) memories. Thus institutions, journalists, academics have either pathologized memories that were not conform with the already established emplotment of

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conversation they have had during lunch which he describes as of a different level of frankness but fails to get the artists to repeat on tape.

‘St-Ives’, or else used women’s statements only partially, that part that is seen as informative for the masculinist narrative. This aspect is particularly clear when reading and listening to the tapes kept at the Tate Archives, made in preparation for the 1985 exhibition. Hardly any of the information given about their work and interpretation made its way to the catalogue. Thus, with the battle for dominance being where multiple narratives are being offered, the access to knowledge – all of it – becomes detrimental and the construction of events has to be settled either in an authoritarian assertion of ‘the truth’ or else by way of gaining dominance through another privileging system. All the stages are tinged by gendered inflections as well as other hierarchical stratifications. The process of privileged positioning is mapped on a sequence of domains; it moves from the privacy of a studio to set locations of encounter, be it the pub, café or artistic Society’s gathering space, to the public real and full spectrum of exhibiting locations from small exhibition spaces to the officialdom of a national gallery. This study attempts to make Wilhelmina Barns-Graham and Margaret Mellis the speaking subjects, in contrast to the powerful narrative ‘expository agency’. As I will argue the momentum of this narrative permeates even the staging and reception of women’s painters solo exhibitions.

### **Power in the Interview setting**

A strong argument about power imbalance when interviewing women in or of colonial origins is argued by Aiwa Ong.<sup>90</sup> For instance the age, gender and professional position of the interviewer in relation to the same set of categories applied to the interviewee. In this model of shifting equations the seniority of the artist and his/her gender leave the power in their court. Theoretically, any interviewee has the power to withhold information from the interviewer, but unlike most research programmes another interviewee cannot replace the

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<sup>89</sup> See his comments in an Interview conducted by Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, (1987) ‘Truth and Power’ pp 51-75 in Paul Rabinow (ed) *The Foucault Reader*.

artist. When interviewing an artist I or I assume any other researcher is after the specific information that this and only this artist can give. The impact of individuality and the specificity of monographic models are still strongly with us. It is therefore, a multiple power position that the artist holds. First and foremost willingness to part with information, time or even being open to thorny questions such that she might not approve of in the research. The power to write up the interview remains with the interviewer who has to find a way in the ambiguity that arises “when [she/I] seek simultaneously to serve an academic audience while also remaining faithful to forms of knowledge gained in...personal and intimate settings.”<sup>91</sup> This power remains evident in the imbalance between the recorded material of interviews and the gendered selection made from it when it came to the publication of the catalogue.

### **The meanings of ‘Living Memory’**

What was positivist assumption about the informative nature of ‘living memory’ or first hand experience retold, has changed and become a more reflexive and contentious category of research. For ‘living memory’ does contain elements of facticity, but their modes of framing, foregrounding, withholding or even active marginalizations are all dependent on the context in which the events are being discussed and by the speaking voice. The adjective ‘living’ thus refers both to it being told by a person who has experienced the events but also that the facts have been narrativised, by a selective process of what counts as an event and what does not or as modifying how the events are being mapped in staggering them in a conceptual scale of importance.

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<sup>90</sup> Aiwa Ong (1988) ‘Colonialism and modernity: feminist representations of women in non-Western societies’, *Inscriptions*, 3 (4) pp 79-93.

<sup>91</sup> Rosalind Edwards and Jane Ribbens (1998) ‘Feminist dilemmas in qualitative research’ p 2 in their *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*. London, Sage.



Vera Zolberg argued that museums (and, by implication, exhibitions about the past) are contested sites of remembrance.<sup>92</sup> She observed the nature of memory as not being a static thing but changing with time and according to circumstances.<sup>93</sup> One way in which this change is being fixed is by staging an exhibition, other ways are by publishing interviews with a male artist, or the greatest fixer of the flux of memory is by way of publication of a prestigious or lavish monograph. When the source of information is a woman artist, the memory does not change from a state of flux to being fixed, but remains open ended and contestable in the fields of art appraisal and history. Footnotes are dense with women's memories about men, but when if they contest the masculine narrative or discuss their own work and life than the parameters of trust and perceived reliability change. Not only are their memories being doubted, their emphases do not seem to count as factual to an extent that they fail to be accepted and incorporated as constituting 'significant events'. In this sense, it is revealing to compare sequences of memories, by male artists and woman artist, in the case of 'St Ives' for instance, the memories of Peter Lanyon about the Crypt Group and those of W. Barns-Graham. While her memories, claims and evidence are brushed aside and discarded, Peter Lanyon's memories and claims (in relation to The Crypt) are being forever quoted as reliable. But as I argue in chapter 4, a detailed reading of his various statements shows how his narrative changed within a span of three years according to his position within the avant-garde, while her claims remain constant throughout. And yet, the authoritative version, that made its way to publications is *one* of Lanyon's version and remains in the historiography as the uncontested dominant version, while Barns-Graham's protests and suggested modifications are being dismissed.

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<sup>92</sup> Vera Zolberg (1996) 'Museums as contested sites of remembrance: the Enola Gay affair', in Macdonald, Sahron & Fyfe, Gordon (eds.) *Theorizing Museums*, Oxford, Blackwells pp 69- 82.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p 70.

Reliance on 'living memory' of artists poses several difficulties: the nature of selective memory; contextual differences which impose difference in emphases; the deliberate construction of an artist's own past with intention for optimal self-positioning; and also lapses of memory. Despite the prevalence and acceptance in modernism of strategic self-positioning<sup>94</sup> it is accepted as a naturalized norm for male artists, but as 'unnatural' for women. For instance, Heron's self-positioning within St Ives and 'St Ives' after the departure of Ben Nicholson in 1958, was conducted by the use of powerful and eloquent rhetoric in which his self promotion was framed within the double trope of the concept of the 'young generation' to which he belonged as well as being the heir of Ben Nicholson.<sup>95</sup> This transference was carried out by way of eradication of other more established contestants to the position.<sup>96</sup> While artistically there is a wide gap separating Nicholson from Heron, Patrick did become the heir of Ben in becoming the main narrator, in control of the official 'history' of 'St Ives' from the end of the 1950s onwards. Heron's persistence that the term 'The middle Generation' was used to define a generation of British modernism,<sup>97</sup> is blatantly inaccurate in its omission of the pragmatic commercial origin of the term, as defined by Waddington, but is all the same an example for the way in which this interpretation, by Heron, has been accepted and incorporated into the canonical art history and into *St Ives*.<sup>98</sup> The case illustrates the way in which memory is linked to contextual battles and strategic manoeuvrings, and despite its numerous inaccuracies, Heron's relatively belated arrival as St Ives, (in 1945) his novice status as an artist, (attended the Slade School as a part time student during 1937-9) and worked during the war at Bernard Leach's pottery as a conscientious objector, only to resume his painting again after 1945. It is therefore, little surprise that his

<sup>94</sup> For instance the famous statement by Picasso that Braque was his wife.

<sup>95</sup> The physical manifestation of which was that Nicholson's Porthmeor studio became his, a physical lineage that signified a conceptual one.

<sup>96</sup> There has also been a serious fall out between Lanyon and Heron earlier, but around the same issue, when Greenberg visited Heron and Rothko – Lanyon, in 1959.

<sup>97</sup> In his 'Asterisks' article for instance, a copy of which is held in PLA.

abstractions owe much to the local French-inspired textile designs of Crysède of which his father, Tom Heron was the manager from 1930 and later, in 1946/7 Cresta acquired the parent company remaining assets after it went into voluntary liquidation in 1941.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, rather than looking at the autonomous explanations or the cosmopolitan ones about influences, the source of Patrick Heron's work was indeed French but via his father's silk printing business, locally, as one of the samples of the textiles indicates (fig 8a & 8b). Patrick Heron was probably equally influential in determining the narrative of 'St Ives', by his access to publication and indefatigable energy as well as well-heeled social family connections. While his 1975 article was not published, all the same, it had a marked impact for its hand typed extensive distribution, and I for one found it in all the archives I consulted. Its presence undoubtedly determined the historiography of 'St Ives' as well as the ethos promoted in the Tate St Ives from 1993 until about 2000, even if by then in a somewhat modified configuration.

### **'Living memory' and artists' statements**

The status of artists' comments is in art history writing almost axiomatic, that is, if it is a statement by a male artist or about him. These are the corner stones of the monographic genre and appear to be the only acceptable direct access to artistic intention. The underlying assumption being that the artists' statement about themselves can be taken in most cases and to a large extent as honest and the most revealing about creative intention. Such an assumption, operating within the field of art history, ignores the question of how do claims become accepted as factual, or an analytical account of under what premises were 'significant events' selected as such. A comparison with how other disciplines address the question of 'fact' can provide a sounding board and highlighting differences in approaches.

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<sup>98</sup> For the most recent study about Heron see Andrew G. Wilson (2000) *Between Tradition and modernity: Patrick Heron and British abstract painting, 1945-1965*, University of London, Unpublished Ph. D.

Within the disciplines of anthropology, history and sociology discussions have been taking place about methods of data collating, their validity and finally a self-reflexive discussion about the nature of their interpretations. My choice of method will at the end employ a combination of open-ended and reflexive methods, that support my intention of making a significant part of this dissertation a platform for the women artists' voice and selection of issues.<sup>100</sup> If there is a narrative form that I have plotted in this section it is, I hope, the one that takes on the concept of 'living memory' and reports on how it has shifted in meaning and in its connotation throughout my research from the voice of 'first hand experience' to that of strategic voices that the word 'living' refers to it as a biological-like system that changes according to circumstances.<sup>101</sup>

Inevitably, challenging the absolute certainty of 'truth', affects equally dominant and marginalized versions of events. Thus, at the end, I have come to think of this project in different terms than I initially intended, it is not aiming at replacing but to modify the official version, by enriching it as it deserves through the added complexity that women painters have added to it. I aim to use this thesis as a corrective space, as well as reversing the trend of dismissal of women's memories. My arguments are informed by the notions and perceptions expressed by women painters and I use their directives as a springboard for my critical and analytical discussions.

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<sup>99</sup>Hazel Berriman (1986) 'Crysède at St Ives', in *Arts and Crafts in Newlyn 1890-1930*, Penzance, Newlyn Orion Art Gallery, pp 43-44

<sup>100</sup> Their views defined my argument, and its details and case-studies, as well as they provided comments about the final version that is presented here as my thesis.

<sup>101</sup> According to the minutes of PSAC, David Leach replaced Bernard Leach, his father, while the latter was away, during the crucial meetings preparing for the 1951 local festivities. When I interviewed him, he could not remember a thing about it, nor even that he did replace his father. Thus, the minutes, full of his comments and activities, were totally lost in his own memory.

## Old Age

In 1996 – when I interviewed W. Barns-Graham and M. Mellis for the first time – they were approaching their mid 80s. Both artists were extremely active, and intent on using all their energy for making art and giving up some of their time to interviews, as both artists were keen on setting the record right, according to their own experiences. Therefore, initially, the only difficulty in my interviews schedule was how to manage the meetings considering their tight and limited time schedule. The issue of their age was paramount on my mind, for while I watched with admiration their intensive pace of creating and organizing exhibitions and interviews as part of managing their careers, I was at the same time aware of their limited energy. Simone de Beauvoir's *Old Age* was the text I used to gain insight into a premeditated study about the conditions of aging on a creative woman so as to corroborate her perceptions with the data I glimpsed from my encounters and conversations with Mellis and Barns-Graham.<sup>102</sup> In it she gives an insight to the discrepancy between an apex of acute creative faculties and drive with decreased physical agility to keep up the pace the artist wants to. The internal individuated condition is further compounded by societal reception of not only creative women, but even further marginalized as aging women. This public (official) appraisal seemed to stress the artists' output to a single past phase of their creative career, a truncation that reduced their creative diversity. There is an element of dismay at what seems to be a patronising attitude to them at their mature age in commentators repeated remarks of amazement at their ripe age and artistic persistence. Both the above attitudes are perceived by Barns-Graham as symbolic or allied to notions of death that had already taken place, despite her active commitment to paint and to explore new dimensions of expression. In that sense the attention and appraisal repeatedly bestowed on her *Glacier Series* was at the cost of the exclusion of many other subsequent works. In her

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<sup>102</sup> Simone de Beauvoir ((1970) 1972) *Old Age*, London, André Deutsch & Weidenfeld and Nicolson. I regarded it as a frank expression of her conditions and thoughts at the time of writing the book despite her subsequent disclaimer of the book.

own words, the exclusion of all the rest of her work amounted to an attitude that implied that she died artistically after that valued *Series*. My observation is that as old women painters Mellis and Barns-Graham are inadvertent victims of their triple headed effort: the continuity of their work, the promotion of their current art and a battle against masculinist and ageist prejudices.

The asymmetry of appraisal, from practice, originality, selective use of information, refusal of acceptance women painters as independent subjects rather than framing them forever within 'chaperoned evaluation', lead me to question what systems of assessment are in place for verification of claims, in art history and in other related disciplines.

### **C. Claims, verification and narratives**

In this section I reflect on the status of data in Artwriting, about the methods of verification prevalent in the discipline of art history in general and in relation to 'St Ives' in particular. While the appropriation of semiotic reading and critical theory have legitimised subjective reading of visual culture and made the new art history a richer domain, by far less attention is still being addressed at theorising the status of facts. If traditional empiricism has stifled much of the humanities and social disciplines, the new subjectivity requires a reflexive attention to the new position of facts, mainly facts that are of the nature of personal memory and/or provided by way of oral information rather than by way of written documents. In art history empiricism is associated with the accumulation of dates, facts and documents of the artist and his work. Marxist and social branches of new art history have adapted methods from the social science, dispelling the autonomous claims of modernism and replaced these with the broader social context. This adjustment relates to the broad social events of the time and the institutions that enable or disable various artistic practices. The only

articulation that I have come across in relation to treating in a privileged way oral memory are of two discourses that belong to and are being received in different frameworks; the traditional artist statement (mostly that of male artists) and the feminist arguments in support of women's autobiography. The former belongs to the dominant cultural perception of man artists as first, imbued with qualities of genius, and secondly of the acceptance of their statements as factual, informative about their artistic intentions. Creative women's autobiography still comes along with feminist justificatory theory, which as good and valid as it is still indicates the degree to which it is not part of dominant culture in so far as it refers to anecdotal and less valued levels of appraisal. Data provided by women is being received with an even greater incredulity when it relates to general artistic practice or informing about the art world activities. New thinking about data, prolific in the social sciences, where reflexive assessment of the validity of that data – accounts of the nature of data, its accuracy, its contingency, its modes of collating, what are the informants investment or interests, and more - have been theorized in new historicism, anthropology and sociology. In relation to my study the issue of the historiography of the 'Crypt Group'<sup>103</sup> was the most extreme case in which I have witnessed a contestation of facts and which has made me first, attempt to assess the claims of the debating sides, and then analyse what system informed the acceptance and rejections of claims and to make that system explicit.

To begin with I want to look at a few, select examples of theoretical consideration of data assessment in other disciplines, so as to see what from their examples might be useful to apply in my study. Peter Burke compares the modes of assessments prevalent among historians, sociologist and anthropologists,<sup>104</sup> all of which are different from those of recent art historical writing. Despite their different foci, all the disciplines that Burke considers

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<sup>103</sup> I am using the term as a notion that is under dispute, not mine but between historians of 'St Ives' and W. Barns-Graham. There is also an inconsistency in the term because of its disputed character.

share application of analytical methods, methodologies and paradigms of rationalization, either explicit or implicit, which exist in the new art history only in terms of meta-narratives and not in assessing anecdotal data. A curious paradox emerged in the Artwriting that had its roots in the individuated-male-focus but which had to be redefined or rather reoriented with the increased acceptance of the Barthesian articulation of the 'Death of the author'.<sup>105</sup> With this relativist shift, the deposition of the autonomous art/ist and its replacement by the viewer, an alternative emphasis, presumably takes place. In this new hierarchy, at least within the academic<sup>106</sup> realm, the reader/viewer/interpreter assumes the privileged position that was earlier reserved for the art/ist in traditional art history. But in effect, that assumed reader remains the *homo academicus*, the same agent who voiced his views earlier, with the difference that now he is writing while acknowledging his subjective slant. What still appears to remain absent from theoretical discussions in the New Art History is addressing what else, from the semiotic understanding of the audience, the reader needs to be considered as evidence, when relating to factual, experienced past reality.

As long as written records, and even more so printed and published statements, are generally accepted in art history as 'proof', a double hierarchical system informs the verification process. In the social sciences the rationalization of the verification can be claimed to be as a bid for competing and being seen as equal with the scientific nature of the discipline. In other words, when faced with an intricate mesh of events or claims to consider, the chronicler's selection of events for special attention tend to be those that either represent peaks of a trend or those that bring about rupture in their progression. Both, evolvement of events and their rupture, belong to the realm of literary, dramatic narrative. Thus, a literary

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<sup>104</sup> Peter Burke (1992) *History and Social Theory*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

<sup>105</sup> Roland Barthes (1968) 'The Death of the Author', in (1977) *Image Music Text*, London, Fontana Press, pp 142-148.

<sup>106</sup> I use the word as descriptive of and belonging to institutional and professional domains and not in its pejorative, popular English use.



narrative is combined with attempted scientific justificatory procedures. The notion of dramatic changes in the progression of a narrative, its point of success and/or failure is the assumed co-ordinate appropriated from the paradigms of literature and sciences; from literature the – the dramatic narrative, from science – empiricism. Empirical evidence, or what counts as such, is sought to dissociate history from the fictional nature of literature, despite the fact that historians map both dramatic events and evidence along what a Hayden White terms as ‘modes of emplotment’.<sup>107</sup> The empiricism that is combined within the emplotment within the art historical field is the twin concepts of genealogical path and periodization, determined not by either societal or technological developments as history does, but like literature determined by the evolvment of biographical events of selected individuals. In that system the authority of the document acts strategically to deflect the tautology contained in this closed circuit. The direction and the conclusions of the emplotment are already contained in the predetermining parameters of the discipline. How evidence, claims and ‘documents’ have been used in the historiography of ‘St Ives’ and its impact on the representations of women painters is the issue that I am concerned with.

White’s argument about the ordering that underpins the narrative impetus of historical construction provides a critical tool for questioning the certainty with which the defining categories and rhetorical framing have been presented in the construction of the ‘St Ives School’. If historical process is one that imposes order on experiential chaotic flow of events then similar facts with different emphasis and ordering can be proposed to stand alongside the first version if not replace it altogether. But it is not a total eradication of ‘St Ives’ that I am after in this study. My intention is that by way of intervention, and reversal

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<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Keith Jenkins (1995) *On ‘What is History?’*, London and New York, Routledge, p 166, from Hayden White *Tropics of Discourse*, p 70. In Anthropology there are discussions not only about modes of verification but also the use of ‘inaccurate’ data, as for instance in Steven L. McNabb (1990) ‘The uses of

method, as exemplified by Linda Nochlin's famous reversal strategy in her 1972 *Achetez des Bananes* photograph,<sup>108</sup> I can highlight the particular gendered asymmetry that operates in the construction of 'St Ives'. Even more important than identifying the kinds of gender bias contained within 'St Ives' is my intention to write an emplotment that locates the women painters as active, professional subjects whose voice is heard on two levels: on taking their version of events as reliable on a par with that of their male colleagues.

In recent years the reading of art has increasingly been one that depended on various verbal discourses, from psychoanalysis, historical narratives, and above all of semiotics, all of which stressed the primacy of language as the primary defining mode for the making and for being a tool for expressing subjectivity. In Lacan's second definition of the formation of subjectivity he added a linguistic basis to the formation of the I in a refining and redefinition of his initial explication of the 'mirror stage'. Lacan writes in a way that combines and adjusts both Freudian ego and Descartes' *cogito*:

It is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak.<sup>109</sup>

Subjectivity is thus claimed to be symbolic and language based, but not without dependency on the visual field. It is thus inevitable that the pictorial realm becomes highly contentious, if not contradictory in the face of totalizing claims for the supremacy of the verbal domain. Historically, rather than fulfilling the 19<sup>th</sup> century's aspirations of freeing itself from the 'literary' dependency, art nowadays seems to have increased it, albeit rather than being dependent on fiction it now depends on theory.

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'Inaccurate' Data: A Methodological Critique and Applications of Alaskan Native Data', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 92, no 1, pp 116-129.

<sup>108</sup> See Linda Nochlin (1989) 'Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth-Century Art', in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, Thames and Hudson, p 142.

<sup>109</sup> See Jacques Lacan (1977) *Écrits: A selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, London, Tavistock, p 165.

Addressing the place of women painters in St Ives from a feminist perspective and from the broad perspective of postmodern scholarship requires a choice between conflicting issues as well as conflicting claims. But with constant change of events, especially the relatively growing public and institutional recognition of Barns-Graham during my researching period, the concept of 'living memory' became a complex one. It appeared to me that 'living memory' of the artist expressed, and stressed a discourse of an experiential (auto)-biography. Memories define the time in which they are being evoked as much as the past events they seem to recall. This premise of what constitutes memory denies past histories their status as being factual, but might at the same time also block any other narrative. In other words, how can I propose any paradigmatic shift in the history of St Ives Modernism if I set my relativism against claims of factual absolutes?

Hayden White's analysis of history as a hindsight ordering narrative of non-linear and chaotic reality proved to be useful. Rather than considering my dilemma from any version offered, by 'St Ives' historians or by the interviewed women artists, I have relied on the notion that a multitude of contesting coexisting versions. At the end I do not make a final judgement, but question why some versions were privileged. The debate posed me with a dilemma of having to resolve the conflicting methods available to me. Either I held to my feminist notion of giving voice to the women artists 'living memory' or else I too abide to the demand of presenting 'documentary evidence' to the event. I have observed that since summer 1996, when I first interviewed Barns-Graham, to summer 2000 her attitude to the issue of The Crypt question has become increasingly persistent and of growing importance to her. Superficially, this could be explained in her gaining public recognition, and the more she gained the more she insisted on her version of events. I also noticed that while she displayed impatience in discussions about her earlier works of art she became persistent and animated when discussing her past involvement in the art world be it local, national or

international. In a way Barns-Graham expressed a double attitude to the-past, a relative disinterest in her work, but passionate insistence about her professional extra-studio activities. I found myself thus faced with two questions: Why did she persist on a phase that the dominant literature only touches on? and how to find a methodological framework within which I can incorporate her ‘living memory’?.

### **The Crypt – methodological implications**

The issue of The Crypt can exemplify Bourdieu’s concept of the field of ‘Social Space’ that is structured through landmarks and various networks of social practice of co-operation such as receptions, *soirées*, and other friendly gathering that are mapped unto and support the professional network of professional interactions. He delineates a double, interconnected map of ‘art and politics’ on one side and ‘politics and business’ on the other; a polar relationships of political and economic power. In this context Bourdieu emphasizes and theorizes the role of the ‘milieu’ in a Newtonian sense, providing a complex location between individuals placed in a social situation.<sup>110</sup> This complexity and overlaying of boundaries existed in the dynamics that made ‘The Crypt’.

The academic relative neglect of The Crypt episode is unique in the history of ‘St Ives’ and fades into almost non-existence by comparison to the emphasis given to either the war years (1939-1945) and to the formation of the Penwith Society of Arts and Crafts, 1949. In contrast to the over mythologized other communal events this episode is relatively little referred to and it is therefore curious to note that it has become in recent years an issue of contention particularly in relation to the dispute who were the founder members of the group.

Methodologically, the central question is: what weight of proof and conclusive evidence do either sides of the dispute carry? Sub questions of this are: Why was she not represented in the First Show? Would the original members accept a photograph depicting the group in her studio with her at the centre, taken by the Central Office of Information in 1946/7 if she was not a core member?<sup>111</sup> Examining the debate proves to be both a methodological general exploration and a specific case-study relating to the operative modes in which women artists within 'St Ives' have been excluded from its Artwriting (Appendix 3). In addition to it being an issue of historiography it is also a gendered issue of what weight is given to 'living memory' and this within restricted topics. When women's 'living memory' was called upon to verify the significance of their male colleagues, their memories were deemed as reliable, not so when their memories related to their own importance and contributions as I discuss in detail in chapter 4.

### **Strategic and rhetorical Positioning (crafts and texts)**

The real novelty of the Crypt is the inclusion of Guido Morris's printing as equal and on a par with Fine Art.<sup>112</sup> But while there is a broadening in the category of work of art, Guido Morris's work can hardly be considered as an example of the modernizing face types trends (Appendix 4). Comparing his printing work, to that of, say the *Circle*, 1937 (Appendix 5) or even the illustrations accompanying Jan Tschichold 'The New Typography' (Appendix 6)<sup>113</sup> or even the earlier French publications of *Cercle et Carré*, 1929 (Appendix 7) and its subsequent *Abstraction Création*, 1932, (Appendix 8) which served as a blue-print for the formula of the *Circle's* layout indicate the difference between what was typographical

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<sup>110</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (1996) *The Rules of Art*, pp 5-9.

<sup>111</sup> In both Margaret Garlake and Chris Stephens published accounts in their respective monographs on Peter Lanyon as well as in conversations with me.

<sup>112</sup> It was David Brown, who as the curator of *St Ives* revived the status of Guido Morris. His reputation had by then sunk to neigh oblivion, probably due to his departure from Cornwall and return to London. Interview with David Brown.

<sup>113</sup> *Circle* (1937) pp 249-255.

modernism and Guido Morris's press. The example is an extreme in what has been endemic in the problem of what did constitute modernism, or as the artists preferred to call themselves, the moderns, in St Ives? Guido's example indicates that there were both functional purposes to his printing output as well as aesthetic and traditional style.<sup>114</sup> In a sense, the inclusion of Morris's prints signals a novelty in democratizing art production and serving as a preamble for the next stage in St Ives, the formation of Penwith Society of Arts and Craft. But it is misleading to take the notion of democracy of the arts and crafts too seriously. In the Society as elsewhere the Art ruled supreme and the word crafts was soon dropped from the title of the society whose name became universally known Penwith Society of Art. The enduring importance of Guido Morris print work despite its traditional rather than avant-garde format can be seen as an index of the phallogocentric supremacy in western thought that combines masculine logic and language.<sup>115</sup> For if we explain the connotation of the print works' in semiotic reading then they become tropes of the supremacy of the word over images even if they contravene the rhetoric of abstraction.

Barns-Graham absence from the first exhibition is articulated differently by her detractors (Stephens and Garlake) and by her own version. According to her, she was in Scotland, being summoned by her father, as was his habit for the summer. She assumed her friends would hang her work in her absence, and indeed had been in constant correspondence contact with Borlase Smart about the exhibition.<sup>116</sup> Wilhelmina's dismay at being written out from the founder-members list is based on her perception that she was in her words 'one of the boys', and by being thus expected to be given by her colleagues and friends support

<sup>114</sup> Alan and Isabella Livingston (1995) *Guido Morris a Fine Printer: an Evaluation*, St Ives, Tate Gallery.

<sup>115</sup> Jacques Derrida coined the concept of phallogocentrism as an amalgam that signals the complicity between logocentrism and phallocentrism. It is a logic that is based on the phallus as a prime signifier and through its double economies of transcendental thought and social structures stands for truth and reason. The argument is most succinctly cited in Jonathan Culler (1982) *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism* Cornell University Press, p 172.

and loyalty. But not withstanding her self-perception as ‘one of the boys’ she also describes herself as being ‘a lone wolf’. How can these conflicting self-presentations co-exist? In my view only in the mis-match between her notion of belonging and the hindsight reality that in a sense she was written out from every possible grouping or periodizing category that defines ‘St Ives’.

In my search for some additional verification to the question of The Crypt I have come across circumstantial evidence that both supports Barns-Graham’s claims but also puts the whole notion of the nature of The Crypt into a new questionable parameters. As for her belonging to the core group there is evidence in letters drafts by Peter Lanyon seem to verify her claim but indirectly. Lanyon addressed the importance of The Crypt in his letters as an elected Press Officer of PSAC immediately after their secession from SISA in 1949, as well as in his letters after his resignation from PSAC in March 1950. Peter Lanyon was the earliest person to highlight the importance of The Crypt and presented himself at times as the driving force behind it. A letter to John Wells, from Italy, however, casts doubt on the significance that Lanyon later attached to it (Appendix 1). From the tone of the letter and its illustration The Crypt is referred to as a location almost as a playing field for the exhibitors, rather than a group of any independent cohesive programme or direction. The notion, or narration changed with the circumstances, as later Lanyon would present The Crypt as a society, the first exclusively ‘modernist *group* exhibition in St Ives, and as Barns-Graham stresses, with the audacity to do so without Ben and Barbara, the King and Queen of the moderns. In a letter written sometime, possibly march, 1949<sup>117</sup> Lanyon justified the secession from SISA by way of outlining a detailed chronology and stated that when he returned to St Ives in 1946 (May) “Smart suggested that we should open up the Crypt of the

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<sup>116</sup> I was told about the letters exchange which are in Barns-Graham’s Archive by Rowan James but did not see them.

New Gallery ... and start a group show.... Those who were showing in the Castle-Inn then founded a vague sort of group with Guido Morris, the printer.” This statement indicates two things: first that the idea as well as the initiative and making the space available were all the doing of Borlase Smart, which means that The Crypt was in effect a part of SISA, and therefore the whole debate surrounding the issue of ‘founder-members’ is not really applicable. Instead the group needs to be defined as sub-group within the Society. The second issue emerging from this statement is the organic nature of the coming together of the core group. Their age was obviously a significant unifying factor for their socializing with each other. But Lanyon also defines the group as consisting of those who exhibited in other, non-art-institutional locations, such as the Castle Inn. In his words: “So the Crypt was formed to show works of younger ‘modern’ painters” who had exhibited at the Castle Inn.<sup>118</sup> Barns-Graham exhibited regularly at the Castle Inn, from 1945 in the various group shows, and by that yardstick belongs to the core group. Lanyon’s excessive use of avant-gardist jargon such as ‘founder-members’ and ‘moderns’ needs to be seen not as factual and as unquestionable evidence, but rather as part of the mood of the time, in which since the secession from SISA and the foundation of PSAC, this language became a rhetorical device for the new Society to position itself, in an authoritative and convincing manner. Therefore, Lanyon’s vocabulary at the time reflects the language used by the new members of the Society in their fight for supremacy over SISA in St Ives.<sup>119</sup>

What I puzzled over was why have so many others, who have consulted the archive, been blind to this statement? On second reflection I found even more intriguing the question why

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<sup>117</sup> A typed letter draft, n.d., in PLA.

<sup>118</sup> PLA, a letter draft, by Perter Lanyon March (?) 1949 p1.

<sup>119</sup> It has to be said, however, that despite the inclusion of WBG as named with Nicholson, Hepworth, Wells, as relevant members who were also members of SISA, in p 2 of the same letter Lanyon proceeds his survey of Aug. '48 and writes: “We added David Haughton, Kit Barker, Patrick Heron and Adrian Ryan to the founder members, plus W. Barns-Graham, who joined us in 1947,” It is difficult to conclusively ascertain whether the word ‘joined’ refers to joining in exhibiting, or to joining the group. Whichever way, it is clear from the after thought kind of comment, that the participation of women was not perceived as equal in importance by Lanyon or other narratives.



have I found this 'discovery' so significant? It indicates that I have accepted the rule of documentary evidence is of more value than 'living memory'. Which poses new method/ological issues in particular the question what is the point of interviewing artists if at the end it is the published document written or uttered by a male artists that has the last word?

Similar blurring of boundaries carried on later and is also present in an unpublished article by Patrick Heron, locally known as 'Asterisks', 1975 (Appendix 9)<sup>120</sup> Patrick Heron, only remarks in a shorthand fashion:

[B]etween 1945 and 1948, the first development towards the formation of alternative exhibiting arrangements took the form of a series of three temporary exhibitions, all held in the crypt of the Mariners Chapel: these CRYPT exhibitions were confined to the younger generation of post-war "St Ives" artists – Wynter, Lanyon, Wells, Barns-Graham, Seven Berlin, the printer Guido Morris, and myself eventually – and as such they now assume a special significance, with the perspective of time.<sup>121</sup>

The mistaken date of 1945 rather than 1946 for the first Crypt exhibition, as well as the broad inclusion of who was considered to belong to The Crypt by a fastidious and meticulously well-organized and informed person like Heron indicates how nebulous the precise dates and configuration of The Crypt has been.

Stephens justified his exclusion of Wilhelmina Barns-Graham from the list of the Crypt's founder members, with the assertion that unless a written document of the time emerges, or else one of the participants will verify it, she would remain excluded.<sup>122</sup> The circumstantial evidence offered by the photograph was equally being shrugged off, with the excuse that it was a staged photograph by the Central Office of Information and hence cannot count as evidence. The reply indicates a refusal to consider first, the group's acquiescence to first gather in Wilhelmina's studio, secondly their tacit acceptance of her being a core member

<sup>120</sup> N. d., in PLA. R. James recalled that he wrote this with the intention of PSAC publishing it. When he was informed that there were not enough funds for its publication, he distributed numerous photocopies in archives museums and amongst individuals. Phone conversation with R. James 15.8.01.

<sup>121</sup> Patrick Heron, 'Asterisk' p 4.

<sup>122</sup> Personal communication with Chris Stephens in April 2000 Edinburgh AAAH Conference. On this occasion he also told me that W. Barns-Graham had confronted him on the issue.

and above all to consider her version as either reliable or even worth mentioning even if stating that there is a controversy about the issue. Surprisingly, the location where the photograph was taken has been explained away by claiming that it probably was as a simple matter of convenience.<sup>123</sup>

The inherent mistrust of Barns-Graham's claims, is an inverted parallel to the absolute confidence in the versions offered by Peter Lanyon, despite their conflicting and varying versions. After his resignation from PSAC, his writings about the 'moderns' became bitter, acrimonious to a degree of lampooning the self-aggrandizing forms of the Society (Appendix 10). In his frenzy of anger and belligerence an exaggerated narrative emerged at one instance he wrote how when he returned from the war, having fought off fascist threat of invasion, only to return to find his hometown colonized by foreigners.<sup>124</sup> At this point The Crypt becomes for Peter Lanyon a symbolic event/place, an expression of his battle to create a regional, indigenous Cornish Modernism. In a sarcastic letter headed 'Jobs for the Boys' he concludes: "I believe that the real development in St Ives has been shown in The Crypt..." (Appendix 11). While it might be argued that Lanyon from 1950 onwards had personal and Cornish nationalist reasons for exaggerating the significance of The Crypt, the eradication of Barns-Graham from the Crypt activities, must be linked to Lanyon's vendetta activities against Ben and Barbara and all their supporters, of which Barns-Graham was one of the more vociferous. As a result, she became the target of the disillusioned rage of both Lanyon and Berlin, both men of her age and who were close friends. Wilhelmina was by association tarnished with the same brush as their most hated targets: Hepworth and Nicholson. Within a short time Lanyon reverted from a close friend of Wilhelmina Barns-Graham and David Lewis into an outspoken enemy.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Personal communication with Margaret Garlake during CIHA conference in London, September 2000.

<sup>124</sup> I am paraphrasing Lanyon's text, but using his own terminology. The documents are neither numbered and often not dated.

<sup>125</sup> Peter Lanyon was the best man in Barns-Graham and David Lewis wedding.

## Writing art/history

Michel Foucault has addressed the question of how to consider past events, and the meaning of rupture and discontinuity. In this context he puzzled over the way that the *Petit Larousse* gave a description of himself and stated that despite having written so much he must have been not clear enough on the matter since:

The great biological image of progressive maturation of science still underpins a good many historical analyses; it does not seem to me to be pertinent to history.... My problem was not at all to say, 'Voilà, long live discontinuity, we are in the discontinuous and a good thing too,' but to pose the question, 'how is it that at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge, there are these sudden take-offs, these hastenings of evolution, these transformations which fail to correspond to the calm, continuist image that is normally accredited as scientifically true. Thus it is not a change of content (refutation of old errors, recovery of old truths), nor is it a change of theoretical form (renewal of paradigm, modification of systematic ensembles). It is a question of what *governs* statements, and the way in which they *govern* each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures. In short, there is a problem of the regime, the politics of the scientific statement. At this level it's not so much a matter of knowing what external power imposes itself on science, as of what effects of power circulate among scientific statements what constitutes, as it were, their internal regime of power, and how and why at certain moments that regime undergoes a global modification.<sup>126</sup>

It is this 'continuist image' and a refusal to address issues of Otherness, be it gender, race, region or artistic practice that presents 'St Ives' as a cohesive, organically propelled British modernism.

Since Vasari's *Lives* artists' activities, works and statements have been integrated into a unified discourse for valorized positioning of the male genius. A reciprocal relationship was established whereby words explicate images, while images illuminate words. In this free-flow of meaning construction, the words uttered by the (genius/male) artist occupy a position of absolute, either as truth or as an unmediated key for artistic intention. While current theoretical claims of the death of the author, critical practice in Artwriting still valorizes and relies heavily on artistic statements, which assume an almost axiomatic status when uttered by male artist, the notion of the death of the author seems to have been only partially appropriated, either by theoretical academic writing, or else only within the interpretative,

semiotic, reading of material culture, whether it is the art work, exhibition, catalogue or museum. But when it comes to the issue of positioning, of assertion to factuality, or to practices of verification, it is the statement of the artist, mostly that of male artist that acts as the supreme 'expository agent'. Despite feminists and postcolonial theoretical arguments for the relativization of information, as for instance, in the recent recasting of Paul Gauguin's assertions,<sup>127</sup> there is still precious little evidence for the use of a rigorous system of verification not necessarily by way of an existing document but by way of circumstantial triangulation.<sup>128</sup>

The status of artistic statement as factual is brought into question when applying to the process of consideration the Bourdieuan concept of self-positioning. Bourdieu frames artistic statements not as informative transparent utterances but as strategic maneuvers, either performed intuitively, or else deviously. The literary genres of biography, autobiography and monograph, are still the most prevalent popular and academic narrative framing of artistic life, with feminist theoreticians defining the methodological intricacies of reading art in terms of autobiography. While feminists' insistence that the personal is political has changed the evaluation of both personal aspects of body and life, as if answering Barthes challenge in asking 'who is the speaking subject' has prompted the feminist to come to a political answer 'I am, and about my own experience'. Thus, while critical theory, dominant amongst intellectual and creative circles has in theoretical terms experienced the death of the male author<sup>129</sup> the patriarchal structure still rules everywhere else, in the popular public domain as well as in the exhibiting institutions and in the publication industries. The

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<sup>126</sup> 'Truth and Power' an interview with Michel Foucault conducted by Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, in Paul Rabinow (ed) (1984) *The Foucault Reader*, Penguin Books Harmondsworth, pp 51-75.

<sup>127</sup> Bengt Danielsson (1965) *Gauguin in the South Seas*, London, Allen & Unwin, was the earliest attempt of adjusting the myth of Gauguin from the perspective of an anthropologist. For feminist and postcolonial readings of Gauguin see Griselda Pollock (1992) *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History*, Thames and Hudson. Stephen F. Eisenman (1997) *Gauguin's Skirt*, New York, Thames & Hudson.

popular genre of biography or in Artwriting the monographs are a rich field for foregrounding of the subjects' voice, mainly in psychoanalytical terms, but at the same time inevitably distort the social context and particularly that of professional fields networks. The individuated focus necessitates foregrounding the subject at the expense of the broader influences, and conditions. The outcome of the application of critical theory to the study of the new art history, has broadened the *interpretative* scope in critical Artwriting, less so in reflexive modes of analysis of the methods, such as the 'interview setting', power relationship between interviewer and the artist informant, or in any procedures of verification. From my feminist perspective this loose procedure, has naturalized masculinist structures that in dominant culture might seem normative, but in effect are what Bourdieu coins 'Symbolic violence'. He comments on the subject in a passage inspired by a close reading of Virginia Woolf:

So the only way to understand this particular form of domination is to move beyond the forced choice between constraint (by forces) and consent (to reasons), between mechanical coercion and voluntary, free, deliberate, even calculated submission. The effect of symbolic domination (whether ethnic, gender, cultural or linguistic, etc.) is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousnesses but through the schemes of perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus and which, below the level of the decisions of consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself.<sup>130</sup>

Whether all the machinations of symbolic violence in the Artwriting of 'St Ives' are as Bourdieu writes "profoundly obscure to (themselves)" cannot be always categorically ascertained, but it is just possible that by bringing these to a level of awareness a different narrative balance might be reached at by a shift in the expository agent.

Linked to the verification process even before considering modes of triangulation or others, is the question what constitutes a significant event? For if Art History does not follow the examples of Sociology, Anthropology and History in theorizing how 'facts' are being

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<sup>128</sup> In a conversation with Lisa Tickner about a hypothesis presented in a paper at Falmouth College of Art conference *Differential Spaces*, she strongly advised me to find a document as evidence. In other words, my interpretation in her estimate depended on the uncovering of a written document.

<sup>129</sup> For example see: Roland Barthes 'Death of the Author' (1968) and Foucault's 'What is an Author'

con/structed, fictionalized, rationalized and is concerned with subjective semiotic and social readings, then the Deleuzian concept of 'event' provides an in-between stage for such consideration.<sup>131</sup> In Chapter 5 of *The Fold* Deleuze claims "Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under the condition that a sort of screen intervenes."<sup>132</sup> This quality of events as primordial-like flow, repeated times and again as an eternal return from chaos, has affinities with Hayden White's equally Utopian historical project. The Deleuzian 'sort of screen' can be equated to the ordering principle of the narrative of the fictionalization in White's theory, that rescues it from its experiential shapelessness into a form that is transmittable as claimed by White, or is raw material ready and possible to be conceptualize as claimed by Deleuze. A gendered hindsight reorganization of information can be seen in Peter Lanyon's letter draft where the name of W. Barns-Graham, though originally written in, was subsequently erased. This erasure is both a fact and symbol for the many erasures of women artists (Appendix 3). Both the historian Hayden White and the poststructuralist Deleuze insist on revisiting Nietzsche's notion, of the sense of chaotic, non linear even non-causal nature of experienced reality, that only with hindsight, is being 'ordered' and 'fictionalized' into a narrative through culturally naturalized and accepted patterns of emplotment. Their theories, as well as those of other contemporary deconstructionists who like Bourdieu have addressed issues of inequality be it postcolonial, feminist age or other topics are constantly being evoked in academic circles, but to date have failed to inform the institutionalized hierarchization, address the structures that are based on and practice asymmetrical valorization.

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<sup>130</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (2001, (1998)) *Masculine Domination*, Trans. by Richard Nice, Cambridge and Oxford Polity Press.

<sup>131</sup> My analysis of 'event' is derived from Tamsin Lorraine (1999) *Irigaray and Deleuze: experiments in Visceral Philosophy*, Cornell University Press, pp 204-207.

<sup>132</sup> Gilles Deleuze (2001) *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Trans. & ed. By Tom Conely, Athlone Contemporary Thinkers, p 76.

## Chapter 2

The Construction of 'St Ives' in the 1985 Tate Exhibition<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The 1985 Tate Gallery exhibition *St Ives 1939-64: Twenty Five Years of Painting, Sculpture and Pottery*, claimed to be the first survey by a major museum of the St Ives School.<sup>2</sup> While there have been previous attempts to represent the art produced in and around St Ives in various classificatory configurations, none had been by *a major museum*.<sup>3</sup> The exhibition, staged as one of the first 'blockbuster' exhibitions, proved a great popular success and established the dominant narrative of 'St Ives' within academic realm. In this chapter I examine this narrative, by way of in-depth reading and analysis of the catalogue so as to identify what categories constituted the construction of 'St Ives' mainly from a feminist critique point of view, with particular focus on women painters, an analysis that will be revisited in later chapters in examining how these categories impacted on the work of women painters and its appraisal. The second part of this chapter is of greater empirical emphasis, it explores the archaeology of the exhibition, in which I reconstruct how the exhibition came about with the intention of casting an informed doubt on the narrative and the certainty in which it has and still is been presented. The empiricism I employ aims to expose how the *auteurs* of the exhibition were explicitly informed by notions of modernism and avant-gardism, as well as implicitly by personal considerations, and therefore it renders their claims less objective than the text would have us believe. Gendered marginalizations, and omissions in the exhibition and catalogue are, I argue, a result of the combination of

<sup>1</sup> A short version of this chapter appeared (1998) under the title: 'Cornubia: Gender, Geography and Genealogy in St. Ives' Modernism' in Katy Deepwell (ed) *Women Artists and Modernism*, Manchester University Press, pp 112-128. *St Ives 1939-64: Twenty Five Years of Painting, Sculpture and Pottery* (1985) London, The Tate Gallery exhibition catalogue, 13 February and 14 April.

<sup>2</sup> *St Ives* (1985).

<sup>3</sup> Earlier surveys: Denys Val Baker (1959) *Britain's Art Colony By the Sea*, London, George Ronald; David Brown (1977) *Painting in Cornwall 1945-5*, New Arts Centre, London, exhibition catalogue; Peter Davies (1984) *The St Ives Years: Essays on the Growth of an Artistic Phenomenon*, Wimborne, the Wimborne Bookshop. Tom Cross (1984) *Painting the Warmth of the Sun: St Ives Artists 1939-1975*, Tiverton, Westcountry Books.

over-stating modernist claims, and naturalisation of masculinist-structures, which have resulted in contradictions and distortions in the narrative offered. In other words, the first part of this chapter aims to deconstruct the dominant and unquestioned narrative and the second part considers what are the implicit notions and structures that have informed this paradigm in both archaeological and semiotic examinations.

### **Early public representations of 'St Ives'**

The attempts to find apt classificatory notion to present a cohesive notion of the artistic activities in/around the small Cornish town of St Ives can be seen both as one that partakes in the modernist discourse of the avant-garde as well as British, national specific self-reflexive discourse. The most immediately telling aspect to the degree to which this narrative has been constructed emerges most clearly when comparing the two exhibitions curated by David Brown, the 1977 *Painting in Cornwall 1945-55*, at the New Art Centre and the 1985 *St Ives* exhibition, each presented a different configuration of time and protagonists (Appendix 12).<sup>4</sup> The first one was a comprehensive survey-kind of exhibition of *all* the artistic output in Cornwall that showed commitment to any of the known modernist affiliation. The second was more restrictive in defining place and practice. Thus, within ten years the same curator presided over and presented two different representations of St Ives artistic activities. In 1977 Brown presented a vision of St Ives artists as modernists in the broadest sense; from late postimpressionist figurations as Althea Garstin, William Gear, Rose Hilton, Patrick Heron to abstracted figurative say of W. Barns-Graham (Appendix 12, cat. 44), David Bomberg (cat. 11) and Victor Pasmore (cat. 103) as well as the two strands of non-figurative: geometric (Marlow Moss cat. 91-94, and Adrian Heath cat. 48) and anthropomorphic paintings (John Tunnard) as well as surrealist paintings by Ithell Colquhoun (cat. 12).

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<sup>4</sup> David Brown (1977) *Painting in Cornwall 1945-55*, New Arts Centre, London, and *St Ives* (1985).



Brown's 1977 definition is, the first museal comprehensive configuration in London, and is different in its configuration from an earlier representation that was offered by Denis Val Baker in his *Britain's Art Colony by the Sea*, 1959, which is the earliest publication attempting a definition of artistic life in and the environment of St Ives.<sup>5</sup> His choice of the word Colony of the book's title declares an overview that might be less inclined to express the modernist perspective. Instead, its emphasis on ethnographic depiction of the place, its environment, natural and societal as a setting for the traditional artists and the modernists, could be seen as a half way house between a detailed tourists' guide book and a history of modern art colonising the old fishing town (fig 13). The different emphases in the two narratives, 1977 and 1959, is a legacy that the 1985 exhibition attempted to combine and has remained ever since an inherent contradiction in the dominant definition of 'St Ives'. Classification oscillates between definition in terms of stylistic affiliation or according to locality, and remains conflicting and unresolved in all the subsequent group representations of the artistic activities in St Ives.

In Val Baker's book the word colony was used as describing the influx of artists into the defunct spaces of the previous economic professions, mainly those of fishing and tin mining industries and replacing them by a new aspiring profession of art making. The colonising Val Baker describes is clad in soft romantic terms. Considering the pictorial evidence of St Ives from its earliest representation of 1813, (fig 14) or the 1870 depiction of Pedn-Olva mine (fig 15) which was a working mine on the location that is now a hotel of the same name. While the literature tends to write about the marine/fishing history of St Ives, it is taciturn about its mining history, both in St Ives (fig 16 & appendix 16) and in its nearby Carbis Bay (fig 17). The fishing history is pictured more in terms of Alfred Wallis's imagery than by the photographic images available (fig 18)<sup>6</sup> and the romanticised narrative

<sup>5</sup> Denys Val Baker *Britain's Art Colony By the Sea* (1959) London, George Ronald.

<sup>6</sup> In a letter dated July 1928 Winifred Nicholson wrote from Feock to Ede about her and Ben's sailing trips with a local fisherman called Johny Merrified (sic). She detailed the shape of the boat and their sailing trips,

of impoverished artists is told without the photographic evidence of economic shift from local traditional small-scale subsistence farming that existed in the town (fig 19) and gave way to being rebuilt as studios/apartments now known as the Piazza in St Ives. The Artists' influx to St Ives was part and parcel of the growth of tourism in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (fig 68) and as a popular resort in the postwar years (fig 20). Tourism became the town's economic mainstay covering its other less glamorous past to become its current gentrified and impeccable destination (fig 21). Without Val Baker's intention to allude to all this history of colonisation and transformation, it all the same is contained in his term Colony and partial ethnological survey. To today's reader the word carries the connotations of professional deposition and its replacement from subsistence industries to either autonomous expression or else provision for luxury objects for upper middle class and affluent public either in Cornwall or outside it.

Different times breed different discourses, and the two representations – Val Baker's and Brown's – need to be contextualized. Val Baker's book appeared at the peak of post war commercial and tourist's interest in local artists<sup>7</sup> and the 'collaged' imaging on his book's cover, combines the two as combined tropes of leisure (fig 13), while the 1977 exhibition came after a long decline in interest in British abstraction, during the time that stylistically Pop and Op and Post Painterly abstraction were perceived as the dominant avant-garde.<sup>8</sup> Brown's commitment to modernism, as well as his 1977 first compilation of a comprehensive chronology of the artistic life in Cornwall, made him the ideal curator for the 1985 exhibition, for which he furthered the chronological outline.<sup>9</sup> His interest in the art produced in Cornwall combined a personal and intellectual involvement, being a collector of

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which indicates that the interest in fishing was only by proxy and through the experience of sailing, as well as their interest in a romantic notion of the fishermen. It indicates that Wallis, was not discovered but desperately being looked for, prior to their visit to St Ives in August. Kettle Yard Archive Winifred Nicholson file.

<sup>7</sup> For St Ives as a site of brokerage during the 1950s see Chris Stephens (1997) pp 51-69.

<sup>8</sup> David Brown claimed that 1963 was the water shed year, in an interview in 12.11.96 and also by Roger Hilton in a letter to Terry Frost in which he refers to St Ives in Past tense. TGA 7919 24 July 1963.

Roger Hilton and a curator. Both the 1977 New Arts Centre exhibition as well as Patrick Heron's unpublished article of 1975 – the so-called 'asterisk article' are manifestations of modernist strategic attempts to counter the decline in the public and institutional interests in the art produced in Cornwall (Appendix 9).<sup>10</sup>

### The 1985 Exhibition

But it was the 1985 Tate Gallery exhibition that fixed the construction of 'St Ives' as the authoritative version in both academic circles and popular imagination and was since revisited in affirmative studies.<sup>11</sup> The exhibition claimed to celebrate English<sup>12</sup> modernism in the Cornish peninsular, mainly during the 1940s and to a lesser extent the following two decades in St Ives by a conflicting claim of both an avant-garde group as well as significant individuals. This construct of the modernism subsumes the earlier versions, and contains mythologized elements as well as internal conflicting notions. Apart from its explicitly claimed constituents, there is also the issue of the exhibition's timing. It is a curious coincidence of codifying national modernism at the very moment that postmodernism has established itself not only as an artistic practice but as a theoretical paradigm that spilled over into Art History writing. The success of the exhibition is unquestionable. It had a vast popular appeal,<sup>13</sup> it rekindled the interest in the artists included in the exhibition, revived a market in their paintings, and in a long term secured the materialisation of the Tate St Ives museum in 1993. The growth of interest in what became known as 'The St Ives School'

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<sup>9</sup> Brown consulted the letters and debates aired in *St Ives Time* reviews (SIT) and, more importantly, succeeded in locating the Minutes book of Penwith Society, which had been lost for a long time. Interview 12.11.96.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Heron (1975) wrote that it was this neglect of 'St Ives' by London that had prompted him to write a survey of Penwith Society, p 1.

<sup>11</sup> Stephens (1997) p 12.

<sup>12</sup> I am writing English, because within the 'St Ives' discourse, the regional identities of artists are being expunged.

<sup>13</sup> 38,000 visitors saw the exhibition and its catalogue has become a collectors' item, see Janet Axten (1995) *Gaswork to Gallery; the story of Tate St Ives*. St Ives, Janet Axten and Colin Orchard, and Stephens (1997) p 9, who writes that his thesis is founded on many accounts in particular that of the exhibition of 1985, p 37. Some of the issues I will be discussing in this chapter have also been addressed by Stephens, but with the

brought about a popular industry of publications, that was followed by the Tate Gallery's own series of publication dedicated to St Ives artists, a series parallel to its publication on cosmopolitan key modernist avant-garde movements. While the critical response was virtually non-existent, its institutional impact on popular reception has been momentous.

### Gendered Exhibition

Despite the lavish and comprehensive nature of the 1985 exhibition it only included few paintings by women artists, this and the unequal appraisal of their work renders the catalogue as a biased masculine-centred expression.<sup>14</sup> There are asymmetries at work both in the inter-gender and in the intra-gender representations of the group dynamics. While relatively considerable space and attention was given to Barbara Hepworth in the exhibition, women painters were at best allocated few exhibits. What were the operative strategies which restricted the coverage of women painters belonging to the St Ives group? Miriam Gabo and Margaret Mellis, for example, were referred to principally as 'wives-of' (male) artists, while both Mellis and Barns-Graham were represented as if their artistic development was arrested. Amongst the 59 colour plates reproduced in the catalogue, there is only one of Wilhelmina Barns-Graham (fig 10), and one of Mary Jewels painting (fig 22)<sup>15</sup> compared to 12 works by Nicholson; 9 by Hepworth; 6 by Alfred Wallis; and 4 illustrations each by Gabo, Lanyon, Hilton and Heron. Neither of Mellis's two works exhibited in *St Ives* was illustrated in the catalogue.<sup>16</sup> But most surprisingly, neither

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significant difference that he sharpens the catalogues general view without disrupting its basic assumptions, which is my main deconstructive aim.

<sup>14</sup> The discrepancy between the sexes was even greater in the exhibition than that of the catalogue as there were additional paintings by male artists who brought their work during the hanging and insisted that the work was included. Information from interview with David Brown 12.11.96. About other general traits of masculine behaviour within the St Ives community, see Stephens (1997) pp 46-50.

<sup>15</sup> M. Jewels *Cornish Landscape* c.1940-50, *St Ives 1939-64 cat. No 2*. W. Barns-Graham, *Island Sheds, St Ives no1*, 1940 cat. No. 39.

<sup>16</sup> The two listed in the catalogue are: *Collage with Red Triangle*, 1940 29.5 x 23 cm, priv. Coll, cat no 60 p 167-8; and *Construction in Wood* 1941, 36.5 x 37.3 cm., Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. Cat. No 61, p 168.

Winifred Nicholson nor Marlow Moss featured in the exhibition or in the catalogue as artists.<sup>17</sup> The asymmetry, therefore, is manifest in both quantitative and qualitative ways.

### The archaeology of the idea of 1985 exhibition

Not only was the exhibition and its catalogue an all-male project, supported by a mainly female team of assistants and researchers,<sup>18</sup> but also its main motivators - planners, executors and essayists - were individuals who had personally biased motivations. These motivations were of either personal ties of male network of friendships and loyalties that override familial loyalties to their spouses when they were professional artists.<sup>19</sup> The idea for the exhibition underwent many permutations with at the end coming to fruition only through Alan Bowness commitment to the project and who had the 'power'<sup>20</sup> to decide not only about the realisation of an idea, but also to determine its format.

Alan Bowness held a pivotal dual role - his professional and personal positions - which compounded to his 'power'. He was the then director of The Tate Gallery, and married to Sarah, one of Hepworth/ Nicholson's triplets, as well as the executor of the Hepworth estate. David Lewis referred to this singular position of 'power', probably with gratitude that after almost a decade of planning the exhibition<sup>21</sup> it finally did materialise. The new plan retained something of Lewis's original idea of writing a book though in the reduced format of a personal memoir as the central essay in the catalogue.<sup>22</sup> Both Lewis and Bowness, who

<sup>17</sup> Marlow Moss did feature in the 1977 exhibition.

<sup>18</sup> Of D. Brown's assistants, only one was a man. Ann Jones researched and compiled the catalogue entries, Caroline Odgers supervised the planning of the exhibition and catalogue, and Sarah Fox-Pitt interviewed the artists with David Lewis and was responsible for the documentation section in the exhibition.

<sup>19</sup> Of the many couples of artists - Hepworth/Nicholson, Bams-Graham/Lewis, Mellis/Stokes, Israel/Gabo, Delia/Heron, Rose Hilton/Roger Hilton, Feiler - only Nicholson supported Barbara professional commitment, but that too up to a point. Thus, to put a twist on the famous feminist book, *Significant Other*, it appears that the St Ives artists wives were treated by their spouses as Insignificant Other.

<sup>20</sup> David Lewis, in a letter to J. Axten dated 16 March 1994.

<sup>21</sup> The first discussion and idea for staging an exhibition was in 1976, between Lewis and Heron, while observing the decline in the local arts public evaluation. See Axten (1995) p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> In 1981 David Lewis and S. Fox Pitt conducted an extensive series of interviews for a publication: 'Living Memories about Art and Cornwall 1935- 1975' which was to be a collaboration between the Tate Gallery Archive and The Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh. The publication never materialized but some of the material recorded in 1981 served in a very limited way, for the 1985 exhibition and appeared in the catalogue as 'St Ives: A Personal Memoir 1947-1955' in *St Ives 1939-64*, pp 13-41.

wrote the forward to the catalogue,<sup>23</sup> were linked personally and professionally with the art world of St Ives. Lewis was married to Wilhelmina Barns-Graham from 1949 to 1963, in 1950 he became a secretary to Hepworth and helped to catalogue her work, he also was elected to act in a combined role of the secretary of Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall, and its exhibitions curator for a nominal salary.<sup>24</sup> Thus, considering their familial and social relationships, Bowness' and Lewis' role can be defined in sociological terms as that of insiders and participants to the social group they portray and are informants of.<sup>25</sup> As a result, despite their claim that they are positioning St Ives modernism within the Cosmopolitan cultural lineage, their authorial voice is steeped in personal interests which are particularly implicated in how women artists were included in or excluded from the construction of the group. Lineage and matrimonial allegiances became a kind of biological genealogy that determined the narration of the artistic merits.

### **The inclusive versus exclusive list debate**

Disagreements of who belongs to 'St Ives' have been a feature of its artwriting from the start. Stephens identifies two camps in the construction of 'St Ives': the inclusive and the exclusive listing. But this simplistic binary division needs to be mapped unto additional divisions of gender, age as well as artistic and social affiliations. In between the extremes of inclusive listing of Brown and the exclusive one of Bowness there are other configurations, of which at different times different people proposed diverse configurations: Patrick Heron, in 1975; Lewis/Heron in 1976; and Lewis and Fox-Pitt in 1981. These diverse possible configurations remain inherent in the 'St Ives' presented in the *St Ives*

<sup>23</sup> A. Bowness 'Foreword' *St Ives* (1985) pp 7-8.

<sup>24</sup> On the 7 February Mrs Armstrong suggested that David Lewis should be asked to replace her and be paid agreed £3.- a week and 5% on sales would be offered for an assistant 'secretary & curator'. TAM 76/1, pp 50-52.

<sup>25</sup> The term is used here in a sociological sense. Methodological accounts consider the various trajectories of power relations in the situation of interview. See Mary M. Fonow and Judith A. Cook (eds.) (1991) *Beyond Methodology; Feminist Scholarship and lived Research*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, pp 1-15.

event. Very little of the original idea remained in the Tate Gallery's staging of *St Ives*. The many alternative possibilities put into question the over-determined narrative offered in *St Ives* and since 1985. Lewis recalled that:

The origin of the idea to hold an exhibition of what we came to refer to as the "middle" generation of St. Ives artists, active roughly between 1946-1966, was a dinner table conversation between me and Patrick Heron at Eagle's Nest in the late seventies. At Patrick's urging I promised to see whether my friend Leon Arkus, the then Director of the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, would have any interest in such an exhibition. The artists I proposed were: Peter Lanyon, Patrick Heron, Bryan Wynter, W. Barns-Graham, Terry Frost, John Wells, and Roger Hilton. Leon suggested three (Lanyon, Heron, and Hilton) plus William Scott. I resisted strongly and stuck with my list. I should add, that Patrick Heron urged me to drop Barns-Graham, but I felt that she had as central a role as any of the others and should be included.<sup>26</sup>

For both Lewis and Heron the focus on the 'middle generation' was one of personal experience, interest and benefit. In the mid 1970s they appropriated the term 'middle generation', which was originally coined by Victor Waddington, the art dealer, in the 1950s. During his frequent acquisition visits to St Ives in the post war years, Waddington coined the term 'middle generation' which served him as a classification that distinguished between levels of 'significance' but also allied the work made in St Ives by the aspiring artists and the established Hepworth and Nicholson, using the term for pure commercial reasons. In Heron and Lewis's appropriation the term became an exclusive masculinist list. The lists did not propose any stylistic unified trend nor are they bracketing the same generation or artistic commitment. They included a circle of men artists who were loosely associated to different degrees with St Ives but whose network solidarity was made tighter through their teaching employment in Saint Martin's, London, and in Corsham, Bath.<sup>27</sup> Thus the term 'middle generation' was appropriated, changed and used to encompass an affiliation that did not take place in St Ives, but in various art schools. These offered another social space, outside St Ives for male bonding and strategic planning.

<sup>26</sup> In a letter to me dated, 1 Dec 1996. Also, J. Axten (1995) *Gaswork to Gallery* pp. 33-37. According to Lewis there was a disagreement over Barns-Graham's significance, about which he also wrote to J. Axten, 16 March 1994, and reiterated in a phone conversation to me on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1996.

The decline in interest-during the 1970s in St Ives artists has not only prompted plans for exhibitions but also activities to highlight the artists importance through their appraisal abroad, mainly in the USA. In 1975, Patrick Heron, wrote his *Asterisks* essay where a hierarchy of importance was marked by the numbers of asterisks next to British artists' names who had exhibited in the USA. Heron's formula of significance adhered to the following qualities: modernism, living in or being in sympathy with St Ives, having had one-man exhibitions in the USA. He calculated that "of the fifty-one one-man shows between 1943 and 1965: no less than thirty of these were by artists connected more or less intimately with the Penwith Society".<sup>28</sup> Heron explained the asterisks system as follows: one asterisk for Henry Moore, just a sympathetic supporter; two for Alan Davie and William Schott who are firmly *seen* (my emphasis) as 'St Ives' artists; and three asterisks against the names of those who lived in or near St Ives and belonged to Penwith Society. William Scott, who featured highly in both proposed lists of Patrick Heron, featured in the 1985 catalogue, as a marginal artist with only two works one abstracted figurative, the other abstraction.<sup>29</sup>

Each of the vying scenarios inevitably constructs a configuration of some omissions and marginalizations. The most consistent omissions are those of gender and craft,<sup>30</sup> but there are also other omissions such as that of Surrealism or British regionalism. For instance, how do William Scott and Francis Bacon, both acclaimed modernists, relate to 'St Ives' has not yet been addressed. The definition of modernism that Alan Bowness offered is one limited to practitioners of either geometric abstraction, or of abstracted figuration, mainly that of Cornish or other rural landscape representations. In this configuration the expressions of

<sup>27</sup> The correspondence between R. Hilton and T. Frost in the Tate Archive is full of exchanges about ideas of art, teaching and general male bonding socially. TA 7919.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick Heron (1975) hand typed manuscript, p 1. He wrote it with the intention to publish it with the financial support of PSAC, but as the funds were not made available it remained unpublished. Information, Rowan James who at the time was one of the official officers at PSAC.

<sup>29</sup> *St Ives*, cat., nos. 122, 123.

<sup>30</sup> Despite the inclusion of pottery and craftsmen in *St Ives* exhibition, the space allocated to them is minimal in proportion to the fine arts.



late postimpressionist-landscapes of rural genres paintings were excluded. Peter Lanyon astutely identified that such a definition is problematic as early as 1950. He identified three artistic groups within PSAC: traditionalists, modernists and the 'romantic primitives', headed by Sven Berlin, who he claimed were excluded from the *Society*, amongst other things, for their non-compliance to the demand of the artists to classify themselves as traditional artists or abstractionists.<sup>31</sup> Lanyon's notion of the 'romantic primitive' defines different configuration of practice within 'St Ives', which is by far a better definition than the modernist offered in *St Ives*.

### Omissions and marginalizations

Berlin's categorical refusal to be classified as either abstract or figurative, as astute as it was, was not the only reason for his confrontational stance against the imposed rules of PSAC. He rightly realized the rejection of any surreal expression from being considered as part of modernism, a rejection that had its roots in the schism and rivalry of the two avant-gardes in London in 1936, that between the International Surrealists and the Constructivists.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, artists with surrealist affinities working in Cornwall have systematically ignored by PSAC and marginalized in *St Ives*. For instance the neo Romantic Stuart Armfield, who featured in Val Baker's book (fig 23)<sup>33</sup>; David Haughton, a member of the Society has only two illustrations in *St Ives* catalogue; and John Tunnard, a surreal-abstract artist is represented by only one work in the 1985 exhibition<sup>34</sup>, while Ithell Colquhoun is not represented at all,<sup>35</sup> nor are the extraordinary couple Dr Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben

<sup>31</sup> An undated, handwritten draft letter of response addressed to The Editor of the *St Ives Times*, in PLA, Newlyn.

<sup>32</sup> André Breton opened *The International Surrealist Exhibition at New Burlington Galleries* 11 June 1936, for the art politics in London at the time see Michel Remy (1999) *Surrealism in Britain*, Aldershot, Ashgate, pp 70-100.

<sup>33</sup> Illustration in Val Baker (1959) p 49.

<sup>34</sup> In *St Ives* Tunnard is curiously represented in the section 'Before 1939' with one painting, which might refer to his settling in Cornwall in 1930, as well as combining his surreal art with the primitivizing of Wood and Primitive paintings of Wallis, thus reducing his affiliation to an avant-garde. Tunnard was the only artist who failed to be elected to PSAC in 1949. See *St Ives* cat. no. 10, for his *Fulcrum* 1939.

<sup>35</sup> For Ithell Colquhoun, see Whitney Chadwick (1985) *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, Thames and Hudson, and Michel Remy (1999).

Mednikoff who experimented in art and psychoanalysis.<sup>36</sup> Even more curious omission is that of Robert Adam, whose constructivist sculptural work should represent the most appropriate example of practice approved and promoted by PSAC. Adam lived and worked in St Ives and was a member of Penwith Society, but has been omitted from *St Ives* exhibition and catalogue for *his* refusal, in early 1980s, to be either interviewed or classified.

The absence of Winifred Nicholson from the 'pre-1939' section of *St Ives* catalogue, the section in which Alfred Wallis features with as many as 20 illustrations, and Christopher Wood with 7 is the most explicit of gender-based omission. Other than being mentioned as Ben Nicholson's first wife, Winifred features only indirectly in the catalogue, in a token portrait by Christopher Wood *The Fishermen's Farewell* (fig 24)<sup>37</sup>. This surprisingly prophetic painting, also contains an unintended connotation of reducing Winifred to an elemental maternal figure, a contemporary Madonna, who is seen being left holding the baby, Jake, in this instance. Winifred's head is depicted at the centre of the depiction, with the enclosed harbour, and buildings behind her, behind, Ben, the fictitious Fisherman, the phallic Smeaton's pier and the open sea. The composition is gendered in the sexes depicted in the foreground and the appropriate gendered backgrounds for each. Behind her head, the home harbour and buildings, behind him the open sea and sailing ships map the domains limited domestic and endless travels, to be read as professional freedom in a semiotic reading. Winifred features as a model rather than the professional and accomplished artist she was at the time, who in 1928 not only was more accomplished than either Ben or Christopher, but also was the only painter of the three who sold paintings when she exhibited in London.

<sup>36</sup> See Andrew Wilson (ed) (1998) *Sluiceways of the Mind, the Collaborative Work of Dr Grace W. Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff*, exhibition and catalogue, Leeds, Leeds City Art Galleries, 15 January – 8 March 1998, with articles by Nigel Walsh, David Maclagan and Michel Remy.

<sup>37</sup> *St Ives* (1985) cat. no 35.

Similar, if slightly less acute, gender-based marginalizations were David Lewis's comments about Barns-Graham in his 'memoir'. Despite Lewis's claims in his correspondence, quoted above, where he claimed that he argued for the inclusion of Barns-Graham in the original exhibition, and despite his close association, knowledge of Wilhelmina's art, and his debt to her plus the additional facts that he and Sarah Fox-Pitt have collated in their interview,<sup>38</sup> he all the same writes about Barns-Graham's art only in one paragraph and in a highly reductive evaluation. In addition, this brevity is accompanied by pejorative anecdotes, revisiting private, painful teases that he knew were for her a source of irritation.<sup>39</sup> The limited space allocated for illustrations of or discussion about women's *paintings* stands in reversed relation to their dense presence as eyewitnesses and informants in the footnotes.

### Major figures – the exclusive list

The construction of 'St Ives' is predicated on the concept of 'major figures',<sup>40</sup> another defining key category of conflicting views. In the event, the compilation of 'major artists' was only incorporated after the project of the exhibition had been taken up by Alan Bowness, then the director at the Tate Gallery (1980-88) but not without his insistence on a change of temporal and personae parameters to celebrate the major artists: Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Naum Gabo, "because *they* (my italics) had established the 'setting' in which the younger artists were working".<sup>41</sup> Bowness' exclusive listing was argued on the ground that the exhibition ought to centre on artists that earned cosmopolitan recognition (Nicholson, Hepworth, Gabo) as well as local importance.<sup>42</sup> What was understood by the term 'local importance' became blurred, as it involved both the natural elements of the

<sup>38</sup> On 14 April 1981. TAV 250AB

<sup>39</sup> Especially insulting is his ridicule of her in writing about her supposed nickname: 'Balustrade', *St Ives* (1985) p 25. He even writes: "The most important to me *personally* (my italics) of all the artists who came and went were Victor Pasmore, Priaulx Rainier and Patrick Heron." *St Ives* (1985) p 34.

<sup>40</sup> The term was defined by Alan Bowness in the 'Preface' section to the catalogue 1985, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> D. Lewis Letter to the author 1 December 1996.

surrounding as well as a wide range of societal aspects: local artistic involvement, local studio work of varying kinds, as well as being born in Cornwall, as was the case with the misinformed notion about Alfred Wallis'<sup>43</sup> birth place and with Peter Lanyon, whose Cornish descent featured highly in his self-identity as well as in the critical literature about him to date.<sup>44</sup>

### The inclusive list

David Brown, the assistant Keeper in the Modern Collection of the Tate Gallery, was the third determining person in the shaping of the 1985 exhibition.<sup>45</sup> His appointment as the curator of the exhibition was a fortunate choice, because of his in depth-knowledge of the work of the artists associated with St Ives and living in Cornwall, as a collector of their art, and for his experience of curating the 1977 exhibition. His commitment to an inclusive list of artists was already evident in the 1977 exhibition at the New Art Centre, in which he included Newlyn and St Ives artists, as well as a relatively improved ratio of women artists.<sup>46</sup> In 1985 he found that in order to retain his inclusive list he had to stand up to Bowness's insistence on an exclusive artistic inclusion.<sup>47</sup> In Brown's hindsight estimate, his greatest success was in being able to include a section dedicated to ceramics,<sup>48</sup> as well as

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<sup>42</sup> C. Stephens (1997) In an interview with A. Bowness who reiterated that he, wanted an exhibition of only 4-5 artists 'of genius'. 4 May 1993, p.12.

<sup>43</sup> He was originally wrongly thought of as being Cornish-born, while he was born in Devonport, the ancient capital of Devon.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Lanyon was considered by Bowness "perhaps the most gifted of the second generation of St Ives artists....the only major figure to be Cornish-born." in 'Foreword' *St Ives 1939-64* (1985) p 7. His Cornish descent features in Garlake's (1998) and C. Stephens' (1997) and (2000). P. Lanyon's father has his photographed portrait hanging in St Ives Museum. An interesting classification of Cornish born temperamental 'types' appears in the interview between D. Lewis & S. Fox-Pitt with Priaulx Reiner, TAV 254 AB, p 82.

<sup>45</sup> Originally trained and working as a veterinary doctor, visiting one of the British Council exhibitions in South Africa turned him into an enthusiastic collector mainly of Roger Hilton but also of other British Art. Since 1961 became also a friend of Roger Hilton and his encounter with his art made him to retrained as an art historian.

<sup>46</sup> Despite his 'improved' ratio, still the actual percentage of women painters did not reflect the true proportion of them in Cornwall.

<sup>47</sup> Information from interview with D. Brown

<sup>48</sup> For which he commissioned Oliver Watson to write the introduction and catalogue entries. See O. Watson (1985) 'The St Ives Pottery' in *St Ives 1939-64*, pp. 220-241. All the information relating to D. Brown is from interview on 12.11.96.

craft (with particular delight-in-being able to include the embroiderer Alice Moore<sup>49</sup>)-and the inclusion of the women painters: Mary Jewels, W. Barns-Graham and M. Mellis. Other than being keen on exhibiting the variety of creativity in St Ives, Brown also aimed at replicating in the exhibition an idealized configuration of practitioners within the Penwith Society.<sup>50</sup> The legacy of the unresolved debate between the inclusionist and exclusionist views is reflected in the various periodizations, as well as in the inconsistent emphases of the various 'sub-sections' of the 1985 catalogue.

### The problem of periodization

The various time spans offered in *St Ives* are inseparable from the unresolved inclusive and exclusive lists. The catalogue's titular commitment to the years 1939-64 fits Bowness exclusive preference and privileges Ben and Barbara's war and post-war years. But the other texts of the catalogue give other temporal boundaries, each to fit the author's construct of 'St Ives'. David Lewis' 'Personal Memoir' covers the years 1947-1955 and is determined by *his* personal experience in St Ives.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, in his 'Chronology' David Brown collated a long-term span of modernity and modernism in St Ives, from Turner's visit to the town in 1811 until 1975, the year in which three artists died: Bryan Wynter, (11 February), Roger Hilton (23 February) and Barbara Hepworth (20 May). The 'Catalogue' section<sup>52</sup> however, spans from 1928, - the year of Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood's visit to St Ives, and their 'discovery' of Alfred Wallis - until 1975. As with the inclusion debate, these periodizing contradictions are presented side by side without any attempt to either explain or unify them.

All the versions seem to be determined mainly by biographical dates of the 'major figures' and only to a lesser degree by dates that mark the internal dynamics of the 'art world' of St

<sup>49</sup> A member of PSAC and who exhibited with it in 1949.

<sup>50</sup> In conversation with D. Brown November 1996.

<sup>51</sup> It is close to Heron's suggestion of an exhibition to the Arts Council to mount an exhibition of the *Penwith Society* 49-79, represents an equally self-interested configuration.

Ives. In other words, the temporal boundaries are of slippery nature that is fitted-around biographical events of either the 'major figures' or the authors' personal experiences, all unified by the privileging of the *locus genii* qualities of St Ives. This construct professes to be about the group but is informed by categories that reinforce the autonomous discourse of modernism, but involve a blind spot in its field of vision.

### The structure of the Catalogue

The various contradictions within the narrative of *St Ives* catalogue are most obviously expressed in the inconsistent structure of sub-sections of the 'Catalogue'. The catalogue's 241 pages are divided into the following sections: David Lewis 'St Ives: A personal memoir 1947-55'<sup>53</sup>; 'Poems by W.S. Graham'.<sup>54</sup> Documentation sections follow these: 'Colour Plates';<sup>55</sup> David Brown's 'Chronology'<sup>56</sup> and 'Biographical Notes'.<sup>57</sup> The 'Catalogue' section<sup>58</sup> is divided into 10 sub-sections some of which follow a chronological order the rest are monographically based (Appendix 13); sub-sections: I. 'Before 1939'; II. '1939-45 The War Years' and X. 'Post 1964' belong to the former, and sub-sections: VI. 'Lanyon', VIII. 'Heron' and IX. 'Hilton' belong to the latter formula. Sub-sections III. and IV. are bracketing the same period of 1946-54 but distinguish between The Older and the Younger Generation. Section V., artfully located at the centre of the sequence, seems to be without any temporal boundaries but focuses on the pivotal couple 'Nicholson and Hepworth'. Sub-section VII. is dedicated to 'Frost, Wynter and their contemporaries' into which W. Barns-Graham and Sandra Blow are subsumed. The last twenty pages of the *St Ives* catalogue

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<sup>52</sup> *St Ives* (1985) pp 148-219.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. pp 13-41.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. pp 42-48.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. pp 49-96. Of the total of 62 works illustrated 9-sculptures by B. Hepworth; 2- constructions and 2 paintings by Gabo; 12 paintings by Ben Nicholson; 6 paintings by Alfred Wallis; 4 by Patrick Heron; 4 by Roger Hilton; 4 by Peter Lanyon; 3 by Terry Frost; 2 by Christopher Wood, Bryan Wynter and Jon Wells; and a single image by John Park, Mary Jewel, William Scott, W. Barns-Graham, Karl Wesche, Bryan Pearce and Patrick Hayman. Of the 6 illustrations of ceramics two are by Janet and four by Bernard Leach.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. pp. 97-114.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. pp. 115-147 of 49 artists (including 6 women) and craftsmen, but not of ceramicists.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. pp. 148-219.

contain two sections: an overview article by Oliver Watson 'St Ives Pottery'<sup>59</sup> and—the ceramics catalogue and potters' biographies.<sup>60</sup> Thus the catalogue is a mixture of informative sections, subjective ones, division between the art and craft, and within the arts there are divisions of period, age, groups and individuals, in which the only woman artist to feature significantly is Hepworth, second only to the Nicholson. Nicholson features more than any other artist. Two sub-sections are dedicated to the Nicholson/Hepworth duo: III. 'The Older Generation',<sup>61</sup> which is dedicated to their post war work,<sup>62</sup> and section V. 'Nicholson and Hepworth'.<sup>63</sup> Thus, Ben Nicholson features in all the sub-sections; he, the catalogue tacitly claims, fits all of the categories, except that of the younger generations.

### **The use of dramatized narrative**

The biographically based dramatised narrative, of 'St Ives' is dramatized by select highly-mythologized personal events, which helped to popularise the construct, but needs to be scrutinised. Some of these 'key events' are the 'the discovery of Alfred Wallis', 1928, the arrival of Barbara, Ben, triplets, cook and nanny in 1939, and the tragic deaths of Peter Lanyon and Barbara Hepworth. These biographical anecdotes are used to serve a different claim, that of linking the modernism of 'St Ives' to a broader, cosmopolitan avant-garde. The narrative of the evacuees sheltering in Cornwall is explained in *St Ives* not as much as a part of the massive population migration in Europe with the onslaught of the horrific war, but as an integral part of the formations and re-groupings of cosmopolitan/British avant-gardes. Alan Bowness embeds the British migration into the general pattern of modernism, isolating the fate of the avant-garde from the broader social realities of war, stating that it was "the same accident of war that drove the avant-garde painters across the Atlantic to New

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. pp. 220-227.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. pp. 228-241.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. pp 171-178.

<sup>62</sup> With 8 works by Hepworth and 16 by Nicholson.

<sup>63</sup> Pp 190-195. Hepworth with 8 works; Nicholson 9; Kate Nicholson 1; and Simon Nicholson 1.

York with momentous consequences for the history of art.”<sup>64</sup> This general observation, he follows by specifying that whilst “As far as the exodus to America was concerned, it was mainly the surrealists who emigrated; of the smaller abstract avant-garde of the 1930s, a *substantial proportion* ended up in St Ives.”<sup>65</sup> (my italics). In this narration of world events and its impact on the avant-gardes unrest, Bowness’ claim makes a bid for the centrality and significance of ‘St Ives’, with an exaggerated proportion of abstract artists who settled there and links them to an international, cosmopolitan modernism while excluding the surrealists. This meta-narrative is the backdrop against which the exhibition narrows its attention towards a handful of British artists and presents, even within the context of mass destruction, the modernist project as an autonomous event. Recognition of omissions, of the arbitrary nature of the categories, the distortion of the story of modernism through dramatization, I maintain, opens up spaces for revisiting the canon, for corrective if not alternative interventions.

### Local art world

With the emphasis on the locality and autonomous narration, it is surprising to realize that the only attention given to the dynamics of the *group activities* are of descriptive rather than critical or analytical nature both in *St Ives* and in subsequent publications. Reading the activities in St Ives in terms of Bourdieu’s concepts of *Habitus* and *Symbolic Capital* offer an alternative paradigm to the autonomous causality narration. Mapping ‘St Ives’ with Bourdieu’s model offers a different mode of thinking about modernism in Cornwall in which context significant dates of ‘major figures’ are modified by those of the individuals’ habitus and by the *collective* activities of the local and national art world.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> A. Bowness (1985) 'Foreword' in *St Ives 1939-64*, p 7.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid* p.7.

<sup>66</sup> All the dates are from *St Ives* (1985) 'Chronology' section, pp 97-114.



Considering a different set of dates-would highlight the interactive nature of artistic life-in-West Penwith, charting the social patterns of gatherings, actions and exchanges as part of a mapping of the networks and dynamics of the artists' community within an indigenous and local ones. Some of these societal dates are: 1927, when the St Ives Society of Artists (SISA) was founded; or 1932 when SISA extended its gallery; 1945, when SISA acquired the deconsecrated Mariner church (it is still is the Society's main exhibiting venue); or 1946, when the *Crypt* - the first 'young moderns' held a grouped exhibition was mounted in St Ives, as part of SISA. A clearer representation of the dynamics of the place and artists emerges, I argue, by considering critically these rather than by repeating the 1949 mass resignation of artists from SISA – a secession that brought about the founding of *The Penwith Society* (PSAC) – and which has been cast as an isolated defining event.

Rather than stressing above anything else the intrinsic qualities of the environment of St Ives and making these the determining aspects of the artistic activities there, St Ives needs to be analysed for its specific societal make-up, that offered a stage for the activities of a part of British modernisms. This outlining of social space as conceptualised by Bourdieu's model reveals various 'networks', which impart rhythm and structure to both art politics and stylistic exchanges.<sup>67</sup> St Ives's natural environment, and economic decline provided a suitable space to accommodate the influx of artists on one hand and dictated a certain insularity and claustrophobic proximity of the artists living and working in and around St Ives.<sup>68</sup> St Ives with its studios, two exhibition societies the members of which also belonged to Newlyn Society is a field of exchanges, appropriations, refiguring and dense connectedness (even if at times of unequal individuals) that made St Ives such a vibrant artistic colony – one that has subsequently been historicized in Nicholson's terms and

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<sup>67</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, (1996 [1992]) *The Rules of Art; Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Cambridge, Polity Press. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Pp.5-10, p.351, nt.33.

constructed as the 'St Ives School'—predicated wholly on individuals. Contrary to the canonical narrative, I argue, it has been a societal and creative event, rather than the modernist stultified autonomous happening it still is represented as today.

### Arcadian St Ives?

St Ives stands for many things. Both the poster and the catalogue's cover of *St Ives* 1985 exhibition use Alfred Wallis paintings (figs. 1,2).<sup>69</sup> The frontispiece is a full-spread of aerial photograph of St Ives as a causeway, and three maps – of Penwith, St Ives Bay and St Ives Town Centre – are spread on a double spread, following the foreword by Alan Bowness and acknowledgements (Appendices 14,15).<sup>70</sup> The leading article, as well as the sections of 'Biographical Notes' and 'Chronology' are illustrated by many 'documentary' photographs, many of which add up to a generalized, undistinguished, overall notion of a place and time as the setting of the individuals/groups of artists in the construct 'St Ives'. St Ives becomes a place, a name that is imbued with a special, symbolic connotation. It stands for an island (in the town) (fig 21), within an island (Cornish Nationalists consider the region to be an island for it is surrounded by water, with the Tamar River in the north) within the Island(s) that is Britain. Thus the name of St Ives contains an imaginary notion of both national and regional sense of identity, based on its geographical and cultural conditions.<sup>71</sup>

The geological elements as well as its peripheral aspects of Cornwall, Penwith hold an 'exotic' fascination for modernity and modernism. Primordial, unspoiled qualities are being evoked in the Exhibition as tropes a genuine and unsophisticated way of life. St Ives stands

<sup>68</sup> Terry Frost made the astute observation that the collaborations, and rivalries in St Ives did not differ from anywhere else, but in a place like London these are diffused and therefore, less obvious than in the restricted professional spaces of St Ives. Interview with Frost 14.5.97.

<sup>69</sup> *St Ives* (1985) cat. no.26

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 10-11.

<sup>71</sup> For conceptualisation of Britain as an island see Beckett Jane (2000) '(Is)land narratives: Englishness, Visuality and Vanguard Culture' in P. Corbett and L. Perry (eds.) *English art 1860-1914; Modern artists and*

for the same cluster of aspects that both Peter Lanyon and Alfred Wallis are indexical for; Each of them, in his own specific way, stands for a particular concept of authenticity, the former as 'indigenouness', the later as 'The Primitive'. St Ives is thus invoked as *locus genii*, of Arcadian qualities and visual exquisiteness combined with primordial/Celtic qualities that make it an inevitable artistic location.

However, this inevitability of St Ives is either not articulated in the same terms in other texts or even minimized in the monographs of Ben Nicholson, where St Ives does not feature as so significant, or is altogether absent from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century survey exhibition of English Art of 1987.<sup>72</sup> The question remains what was being mapped by the name/place? Or as Elliott and Wallace put it, "what do the differences between (and within) various maps reveal about cultural production?"<sup>73</sup> It might be revealing to notice that the 1985 representation of St Ives as a place and its surrounding environment replicates the construct that Val Baker presented in his book,<sup>74</sup> but not his societal configuration which included the total artistic community active in St Ives.

The clustering of the issues of 'major individuals' and place in examining what constituted the 'St Ives' group inevitably ended up in a narrative full of omissions, distortions through sketchiness in both the direction of over marginalizations and exaggerations. What was defined as the 'first generation' was in effect three couples, that is, *six* artists: Mellis-Stokes, Hepworth-Nicholson and Israel-Gabo,<sup>75</sup> with Mellis-Stokes acting as the social centre if not

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*Identity*, The Barber Institute's Critical Perspectives in Art History Series, Manchester University Press, pp 195- 212.

<sup>72</sup> Despite its title, the content of the exhibition and catalogue is wholly English. See, Royal Academy of Arts, London (1987) *British Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. What is significant about the configuration presented in the 1987 exhibition is that their image of British modernism did not accept Bowness assertions about the centrality of 'St Ives' not only in cosmopolitan terms, but not even in national ones.

<sup>73</sup> Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace (1994) *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (Im)positionings*. London and New York, Routledge, p 156.

<sup>74</sup> (1959) 'The magic of Cornwall' pp 9-26.

<sup>75</sup> In the tight proximity and life of married couples the atmosphere of competitive friendships spilled over from professional to personal matters, as to who of the two young couples would be the first to have a baby.

the creative one.<sup>76</sup> The literature however differentiates between Stokes and Mellis's — respective roles, in what seems to be in terms of gender, economic and age seniority. Probably because it was Adrian's funds and prior social connections that enabled the acquisition of Little Park Owles, the lavish house and turn it to the centre of other artists fleeing London. In accordance with his sentiments and class it was Carbis Bay where a suitable house was found, not in St Ives, though its proximity of St Ives was crucial. Little Park Owles in Carbis Bay offered a spacious lifestyle, St Ives, already a centre for artistic activities, for the established availability of painting materials there.<sup>77</sup> The decision to live in Penwith, therefore, was made for practical and prosaic reasons rather than for its irresistible qualities as claimed. Mellis loves to reiterate jokingly how 'St Ives' almost happened in Norfolk or Suffolk, which had been their first and preferred location of search. The sheer coincidence of Mellis and Adrian coming across Little Park Owles<sup>78</sup> and having to make up their mind because of the pending war, requires to question the over determined narration of St Ives as the only and inevitable place where artists especially 'the moderns' might congregate.<sup>79</sup> Even more telling about the initial insignificance of St Ives is the fact, that twice, when the Hepworth-Nicholson settled independently from Little Park Owles, they too as the Gabos elected to live in Carbis Bay, and their second move they placed themselves even further away from St Ives, nearer to Lelant, where Ben spent much time playing golf. Nicholson's and Hepworth only moved to St Ives, in 1949, when their marriage finally broke up, and each relocated into a separate studio/home. Trewyn, Barbara Hepworth's, home and studio in St Ives, is a walled garden, a latter-days *hortus conclusus*,

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Information about the competition between Adrian Stokes and Naum Gabo, from Richard Read, the biographer of Adrian Stokes 29.6.2002 in Burwell conference, Bristol.

<sup>76</sup> Stokes invited Hepworth and Nicholson, together with their triplets, nanny and cook, because of the impending war. They stayed in Little Park Owles 25 August-27 December. Miriam and Naum Gabo arrived 15 September and the next day found and moved into Faerystone, *St Ives* (1985) pp 99-100.

<sup>77</sup> Interviews with the artist and Mellis, TAV 272, pp 2-3.

<sup>78</sup> Originally spelled Little Parc Owles.

<sup>79</sup> For instance a prime example is the big event/exhibition of *A Quality of Light*, staged by St Ives International during May/July of 1997, where Joanna Moreland states in the preface that "most (artists) have in some way or other fallen under the spell of its distinctive quality of light. This quality is both powerful and elusive; it is subject to a wide range of responses and interpretations." p 11.

where she worked in intense isolation and introspection (fig 25). Ben Nicholson, worked in no.5 Porthmeor studio, but whitewashed the windows that overlook the beach. It is this act of cutting himself off from the view that was claimed to be so central to his art that indicates how the essentializing claims made about the inevitability of the landscape need to be questioned and modified.

### Experiential representations of St Ives

Contrary to the emphasis on the Mediterranean qualities of Penwith, different inflections emerge in literary representations of St Ives based on bohemian lived experiences. Most scandalous of these is *The Dark Monarch* by Sven Berlin<sup>80</sup> or Arthur Caddick's<sup>81</sup> and W. S. Graham's representations<sup>82</sup> - all like the earlier depiction of D. H. Lawrence's short story 'The Nightmare' (chapter 7 of *Kangaroo*), do not refer to the Arcadian side of Penwith but to a dark, menacing aspects.<sup>83</sup> Nor does Adrian Stokes, in his dense poetic prose, dwell on the quality of light of Cornwall, but rather on his personal memory of his dead brother with whom he shared childhood holidays there. Thus, just like Virginia Woolf's nostalgic tone in *To The Lighthouse*, Adrian's vision of Cornwall is elegiac rather than a celebration of light. In his autobiographical *Smooth and Rough*, he projects a mood of desperation in the search to recapture the past happy memories with his beloved brother:

Visits in childhood connected me with Cornwall and with my brother who was killed in the first war. I had occasion once or twice to drive a car on the main road ... where we had been. It was raining on these drives from a riven mist, riven towards the sea so that I could distinguish in comparative brightness a panorama that stood for half-known feelings.

My brother, exercising a love for geology, had examined the freakish Cornish sub-soil. I was attracted later to the peninsula between the two seas, extending on the north from St Ives to Land's End. I thought of it as the only part of Britain belonging to the geography of the Ancient World.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Sven Berlin (1962) *The Dark Monarch: A Portrait from Within* Gallery Press.

<sup>81</sup> Arthur Caddick (1950) *Lyrics from Nancledra*, London, Fortune Press; (1951) *The Speech of Phantoms*, Lt Ives, Latin Press; and (1955) *Quiet Lutes and Laughter*, London, Fortune Press. Stephens (1997) analyses local identities via the evidence gleaned from these and other representations, see pp 34-50.

<sup>82</sup> W. S. Graham (1979) *Collected Poems 1942-77*, London, Faber & Faber, Michael and Margaret Snow (eds.) (1999) *The Nightfisherman: Selected Letters of W. S. Graham*, Manchester Carcanet Press.

<sup>83</sup> D. H. Lawrence (1923) 'The Nightmare', pp.212-259 in *Kangaroo* Penguin Twentieth Century Classics (1997), Lawrence writes about his and Frieda's West Penwith experience, up to p.246.

<sup>84</sup> Adrian Stokes (1951) *Smooth and Rough*. Faber & Faber, p. 17.

Rather than describing aspects of leisure and pleasure or its dramatic coast, Stokes looks for abject traces of the past, both personal and cultural. These are narrated with an air of vicarious aloofness, and possibly they are, in a way, a recollection of the cliff-top retreat in Sorrento he shared with the Sitwells in the 1920s. His pleasure remains impersonal and detached only vicariously enjoying the hedonistic pleasure whose sounds he can hear rising from the beach:

The ocean, far beneath to the side of a lawn....aloft an expanse of ocean and air sparkled....On perpendicular draughts risen to great height, freshened by the trees, a hilarious shouting from bathers between the waves on the vast beach came up to us in summer.<sup>85</sup>

Thus for Adrian Stokes St Ives presented a physical and mental escape, as he described it in 1951, different from the pragmatic even humorous reasons and view that Margaret Mellis voiced. St Ives represented for Adrian Stokes also a new beginning personally and creatively as he had been there a year earlier on a painting holiday, and set a painting studio room for himself there separate from his writing studio. The first sight of Little Park Owles, he wrote, gave him "a quick hallucination"<sup>86</sup> and once they moved in, it became a fortress, a safe haven for him: "During six years (war years that is)... I rarely went outside the two and a half acres."<sup>87</sup> By contrast Margaret's recalls that:

Adrian wanted to paint as well<sup>88</sup>, he said it's no good going somewhere where you can't get materials.... Cornwall was particularly good light and a sort of community and somewhere that ...he liked the landscape very much and he'd been down there already and started painting there himself.<sup>89</sup>

From either of the above explanations it is clear that other reasons than the claimed uniqueness of St Ives determined the purchase of Little Park Owles. Therefore, the over-determined narration of St Ives needs to be modified in relativist terms of: conditions, serendipity, coincidences conjoined with the positive cultural, climatic and geographical conditions. The choice of a lavish house indicated the intention of being able to entertain

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 16. See also many other expressions in the text giving the feeling of aloof distance.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>88</sup> This is one of many statements that Mellis made in her interview to express her more advanced status as an artist as opposed to just a beginning for Adrian in this field.

<sup>89</sup> From a transcript of 1981 interview. TAV 272 AB, p. 1. The same information was also given to me when I interviewed Mellis in October 1996.

there friends from up country.<sup>90</sup> St Ives=community of artists was thought of not for socialising purposes but for the practicality of painting materials. For Adrian Stokes St Ives evoked a complex combination of past memories, a burning present need to escape the city, and the consideration of artistic creative lives, for himself and Margaret. And while they and the other couples ignored the St Ives artists, all the same its presence provided the assurance of having an easy access to painting materials, should war break out.

### Carbis Bay

The self acclaimed 'modern movement' that congregated in Carbis Bay around the generosity and hospitality of Little Park Owles were reluctant initially to mingle with the 'academicians'.<sup>91</sup> It was the persistence of Borlase Smart that brought them into St Ives Society and exhibiting in Open days in Smart's own studio. Recalling these events, Peter Lanyon wrote in 1949:

About 1944, I corresponded with Nicholson and Smart, trying to get Nicholson to join the St. Ives Society of Artists. He was eventually made an honorary Member and Barbara Hepworth became a full Member. I bought the first Nicholson to be shown in St. Ives (by remote control from Italy).<sup>92</sup>

Wilhelmina on her part claims that it was she who was approached by 'Borli' who coaxed her to be the go-between.<sup>93</sup> Only after Smart and Nicholson met the 'moderns' got involved in the town of St Ives. In 1944, with Nicholson exhibiting in Smart's studio on Show Days as well as exhibiting in SISA'S annual Spring Exhibitions.<sup>94</sup> In the Society's exhibitions their work tended to be grouped and placed 'around the font', recalls

<sup>90</sup> Indeed at the time that Hepworth and Nicholson arrived, there was a list of other expected guests as the Sidwells and the Coldstreams.

<sup>91</sup> Information from interviews with W. Barns-Graham.

<sup>92</sup> A letter dated 'March (?)' to Stanley Wright In PLA. Stephens (2000) presents another scenario of events, relying on the letters that Lanyon has written from Italy, and interview with Lanyon's sister. From these it seems that he was at the time at odds with Smart, and with the idea of SISA, and was initially surprised at the rapprochement between Nicholson and Smart, but also expressed delight at the prospect of soon exhibiting his work in the Society, p. 81.

<sup>93</sup> Considering the surprise that Lanyon expressed when he was still in service on hearing that Ben Nicholson was exhibiting with Smart one has to conclude that it was not he who introduced the two. Stephens (2000) pp 81-82.

<sup>94</sup> Hammer and Lodder (2000) *Constructing Modernity*, Yale University Press, claim that Ben Nicholson persuaded Borlase Smart to exhibit the advanced artists in St Ives, p, 303. All the primary material I have come across points to the opposite.

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, to the consternation of the figurative painters members of the society, William Scott describes it in less genial terms as being allocated the space behind the door. The Carbis Bay group lived for over three years in a self-imposed isolation from St Ives and from 1944 they gradually increased their presence, in exhibiting in St Ives.

In terms of the historiography of 'St Ives' in *St Ives* and since, there seems to be a fractured, and privileged reliance on information, as in the over dependency on the narratives offered by Nicholson, Lanyon and Heron, all of which contain self-positioning interests and strategic emphases. The fractured nature of the Artwriting means that other than the recent publication by Hammer and Lodder about Gabo, there has as yet not been a detailed corroborative study about the group, so as to enable a factual comparison of the events. In this fractured nature of the Artwriting about 'St Ives' male artists monographs exist in a contextual vacuum and even at time without internal contextualization of the claims. Peter Lanyon's letters relating to the early history of art in St Ives are one of the examples of this trend. Despite Sheila Lanyon's generosity in making PLA accessible to anyone, his change of narrative and emphases in relation to the various temporal conditions and purposes that he wrote so far has not been incorporated into the extensive studies about his art.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, his master's voice is being replicated without accounting for the changes in his versions, nor the purpose of each of the statements or indeed his relative position at the time of writing each of the versions.

### **The meanings and use of Constructivism**

<sup>95</sup> The main scholars involved in Lanyon's art are Andrew Causey (1987) *Peter Lanyon, Paintings Drawings and Constructions 1937-64*, Whitworth Art Gallery; Margaret Garlake (1995) 'Peter Lanyon's Letters to Naum Gabo' *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. cxxvii, no. 1105, April pp. 233-41 and Margaret Garlake (1998) *Peter Lanyon*, St Ives Artists Series, London: Tate Gallery Publishing; Christopher Stephens (1997) *'St Ives' Artists and Landscape* Sussex University. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis Number DX194587, and Chris Stephens (2000) *Peter Lanyon: At the Edge of Landscape*, London, 21 publishing .



Historically, the Carbis Bay core-group had been united through their various pre-war collaborations in Hampstead, especially through their publication of *Circle*, 1937.<sup>96</sup> In Carbis Bay they reluctantly regrouped as a *Salon des Réfugiés* with Gabo forging new friendships with Peter Lanyon and with Bernard Leach, whom he admired for his erudite views, interest in spirituality, and views concerning the role of design in modern life.<sup>97</sup> Lanyon and John Wells acted out dedicatedly the role of disciples Which Wells maintained with full appreciation throughout his life<sup>98</sup> and kept with him the notes he has taken down from Gabo's farewell speech, which was more a lecture about his notion of Constructivism, than about the place and time that they have spent together.<sup>99</sup>

In Carbis Bay they defined themselves as 'advanced' or 'Moderns' in contrast to the 'traditionalists' - the academic painters in St. Ives. But in relation to their kind of modernism, outside Cornwall, they adopted the definition of Constructivists, which initially – especially after 1936 – differentiated them from the Surrealists, but later, in St Ives they fought over the meaning of and the right to use the term. While Gabo refused to be associated with SISA, despite Borlase letter of invitation to him, he was happy to be part of the Chess playing circuit in the region.<sup>100</sup> Within the Carbis Bay group individual artists upheld different notions of strategic association and distancing. Creatively Gabo felt isolated in Carbis Bay<sup>101</sup> but unlike Ben, Barbara and Adrian he established there a circle of friends with whom he maintained a lifelong correspondence and contact. Paramount

<sup>96</sup> J.L. Martin, B. Nicholson & N. Gabo (1937) *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, London, Faber. Stokes published review articles about both B. Hepworth and B. Nicholson, and Nicholson designed book cover for Stokes's *Stones of Rimini*.

<sup>97</sup> Hammer and Lodder (2000) p 165 on Gabo's early passion for chess, which made him befriend in 1928 Kállai, the editor of *Bauhaus Magazine*. In relation to Bernard Leach see pp 311-12. On a New Year party at Nina Gabo's January 1974 Naum Gabo I experienced first hand his enthusiasm for chess.

<sup>98</sup> See Rowe, Matthew (1998) *John Wells*, Exhibition catalogue, London, Tate Gallery Publishing. Wells repeatedly talks about 'gaboid' forms.

<sup>99</sup> By then relationships with Ben and Barbara was so bad that they did not attend the party.

<sup>100</sup> Miriam Gabo interview with D. Lewis and S. Fox Pitt.

<sup>101</sup> See Gabo's letter to Sweeney, 28 April 1945, SN 10, p. 47, Yale. Quoted in in Hammer and Lodder (2000) p 310. When Gabo settled in Woodbury, Connecticut, Carbis Bay later was referred to as a symbol for isolation. Ibid. p 313.

amongst these are Peter Lanyon, Bernard Leach and John Wells, whose status of disciple is manifest by having taken notes of Gabo's farewell talk in 1945, and having kept it in his possession until his papers were passed to the Tate Archive.<sup>102</sup>

The concept of Constructivism, which initially united Gabo, Hepworth and Nicholson, at the end, became the bone of contention over which their relationship disintegrated irrevocably. In *Circle* the precise definition of the concept was eschewed and the unifying element has been a revival of ideas of the 1920s, but most of all in the late 1930s the term's appeal was its anti-fascist connotation that was tacitly interpreted as a declaration of freedom.<sup>103</sup> Ben Nicholson's art historical knowledge and modernist terminology has not always been very accurate or well informed when it came to non-British avant-gardes.<sup>104</sup> A letter written to him by Leslie Martin sketches the reasons and way in which Nicholson appropriated the term Constructivist art in lieu of abstract:

I always feel that 'constructivist' implies membership of some particular school or group, whereas what you and Gabo and I have always thought of as a 'constructive' work is something that shows a particular attitude of mind irrespective of the group or party that a man belongs to...

I very well remember how the word 'constructive' came to be used in relation to your work. You came back from a visit to Paris in 1936 (?) when you had visited Gabo and Pevsner who had said to each other that your work was 'absolutely constructive'. This you regarded as very high praise, as indeed it was, and I believe that we both liked the word, because of its opposition to 'decorative', because it suggested a creation of something instead of an 'abstraction' (Abstract was the word previously applied to your work), but more than anything because it suggested something positive – a building up process as opposed to a process of elimination or disintegration. I don't think that we should forget that all this was happening just about the time of the Surrealist development in this country and there was some need for a term for a form of art which was quite opposite in character.<sup>105</sup>

Equally strategic was Ben Nicholson's use of the term 'moderns' internally in St Ives, since in the true sense of the word the late post-impressionist style used by the those he called

<sup>102</sup> In 1942 the exhibition *New Movements in Art: Contemporary Work in England*, organised by Margot Eates and Hartley Ramsden, London Museum, Lancaster House, Wells and Lanyon showed Gabo inspired works and Mellis exhibited Collages.

<sup>103</sup> Hammer and Lodder (2000) argue this point eloquently and in fascinating detail, pp. 237-240. They also argue that from the beginning in Russia the concept had several meanings used concurrently by various artists see pp. 82-3.

<sup>104</sup> An Example of which is Nicholson's persistent misquoting of Klee's dictum as "taking a line for a walk", a phrase that is still quoted and repeated in Cornwall. Another example is his letter of incredulity when at the early/mid 1930s Pevsner told him that non-figurative painting was strong and important in pre-revolutionary Russia.

<sup>105</sup> 21 January 1946, enclosed with Nicholson's letter to John Summerson 25 January (1946) Tate Archive.

'academicians' belongs too to modernism, albeit of an earlier phase, only fractionally more anachronistic than the geometric abstraction that Nicholson employed. Thus the term 'Constructivism' had a double strategic positioning use: against an earlier modernism,<sup>106</sup> nationally and internationally to distinguish it from its contemporary, other avant-garde, Surrealism. The effort for self-definition as separate and different from Surrealism had a mixed history. Neither *Circle et Carrée*, nor *Abstraction-Création* were strict about distinguishing between Surrealists or Constructivists, as long as their practice was non-figurative. During the early 1930s Ben Nicholson was committed to Surrealizing practice, which is expressed in its strongest coherent form in the publication of *Unit 1* of 1934. The real schism occurred in 1936 with the massive influx of European Surrealists in London for the International Surrealist Exhibition,<sup>107</sup> which was one of the reasons for the immigrant and native, newly converted Constructivists to join for a concerted effort of countering the Surrealists' success. After the event, recollections of the art world and groups in Paris were exaggerating the division that was claimed to have already existed in the early days in Paris.

Winifred Nicholson wrote in her article about Mondrian:

The Painter he liked best of the old painters, he said, was Fra Angelico – no surrealism there. There was war in the air – but the war between nations was not so bitter as the war between the constructivists and the surrealists. Once, only once, I went to a constructivist studio party where a surrealists had slipped in – he was a Japanese critic, brash fellow, he did not know what one did in Paris.<sup>108</sup>

But despite this claim in the *Living Art in England*<sup>109</sup> exhibition, the self-proclaimed Constructivists (Gabo, Hepworth, Jackson, Mondrian, Alastair Morton, Nicholson and Stephenson) showed with the Surrealists and independents. Within the three years, from the publication of *Circle* competitive optimism gave way to "artistic survival in desperate

<sup>106</sup> Which was waged locally against the members of SISA, and nationally against the School of Euston artists of which the most public manifestation was the radio debate between Gabo and William Coldstream in January 1940. About the debate see Hammer and Lodder (2000) pp 270-271.

<sup>107</sup> Opened on the 11 June at the New Burlington Galleries.

<sup>108</sup> Andrew Nicholson (1987) *Unknown Colour: Paintings, Letters, Writings by Winifred Nicholson*, London, Faber & Faber, p 109.

<sup>109</sup> In London, London Gallery, 18 January-11 February 1939.

— times.”<sup>110</sup> In 1941 a professional jealousy, over the issue of the ownership and interpretation of ‘Constructivism’ ended up with a rift between Barbara Hepworth (supported by Ben Nicholson) and Naum Gabo.<sup>111</sup> In 1942 Hepworth argued, in a reinterpretation of Constructivism, that it expressed an identification with the inner essence of nature:

Constructivism does not do away with imagery – in fact it contains the most easily understood use of images which are undoubtedly organic in so far as they are the basic forms of the landscape, primary construction, the human figure and so on. They are more elemental than the personal imagery of an individual human being to a particular landscape.<sup>112</sup>

This new interpretation coupled with the what seemed to Gabo as privileged access to publications of Hepworth and Nicholson in London, finally determined his withdrawal in April 1944 from the planned publication about the constructive idea and group, as his stipulation that The Realist Manifesto could not be included without an accompanying comprehensive explanation.<sup>113</sup> In St Ives, after Gabo’s departure, both Wells and Lanyon painted in a mode that they defined as ‘Gaboid’ rather than Constructivist, though the word ‘construction’ is frequent in their works’ titles. Of the Carbis Bay group, it is only Margaret Mellis who has adhered to the term and is still using it in her drift wood constructions, but her definition is also an amalgam of Gabo’s ideas and Stokes notions, as I will argue in chapter 4, and is but one of many permutations of the term for artistic positionings.

The established moderns remained during the war years living and working in Carbis Bay. Hepworth and Nicholson moved from Little Park Owles, first to Dunluce later to Chy-an-Kerris, (Tea and Cherries, as Ben liked to call it) the far end of Carbis Bay. Naum Gabo was the only artist who persistently declined invitations to join SISA but Miriam did exhibit

<sup>110</sup> Hammer and Lodder (2000) p 266. It is also interesting to note that in the exhibition *Dada – Constructivism* (1984) London, Annely Juda Fine Art Gallery, 26 September– 15 December, the two strands were shown together.

<sup>111</sup> Details of the rift see Hammer and Lodder (2000) pp 276–277.

<sup>112</sup> Hepworth letter to read, 8 April [1942], Victoria, quoted in Hammer & Lodder (2000) p 303.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

—under her maiden name Israels.<sup>114</sup> The departure of Adrian Stokes, Margaret Mellis and Miriam and Naum Gabo, in 1946 sealed the end of the group. As late as 1949, when their marriage finally broke up Barbara and Ben moved separately into their respective homes in St Ives though they remained in constant contact especially in relation to professional and promotional matters.

### The 'Moderns' into St Ives

Barns-Graham recalls how her involvement with SISA was frowned upon in Little Park Owles and how she was ridiculed for joining the "R.A.s".<sup>115</sup> But the initial distance maintained from SISA did not however, stop Ben Nicholson from going to St Ives and trying to convince people over to his cause, as Mellis recalled,<sup>116</sup> or from dreaming about taking over the exhibition facilities of SISA, or the control over the Porthmeor Studios.<sup>117</sup>

The distinction between Carbis Bay and St Ives, as different in their social make-up, is one that Wilhelmina insisted on in numerous interviews. Having lived in St Ives, ever since her arrival, and in Teatotal Street in Downalong after her marriage, gave her an informed insight to local views and habits.<sup>118</sup> Much of the documentation I read during my archival searches confirms this notion of separateness even if only by implication rather than outright distinction.

<sup>114</sup> It is difficult to know whether Gabo did not join because he regarded SISA too provincial for his stature or whether his decision was simply another manifestation of his disillusionment with any group activities, which he already had expressed in relation to the Paris *Abstraction Création* internal intrigues.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with W. Barns-Graham, 1996.

<sup>116</sup> In a detailed letter to David Brown TA 7817.6.

<sup>117</sup> TAV 272 AB. In her 1983 additions section.

<sup>118</sup> David Lewis while interviewing Priaulx Rainier switches roles and takes over the conversation by telling his memories. He recalls how when living in 'down along' an old fisherwomen said: "Down along (people) don't belong up along", when asked if she goes up the hill, where her daughter was living near to Leach's pottery. Apparently she never moved away from St Ives Harbour and Lelant seemed to her as far away up the line. TAV 254 AB, pp. 82-3. W. Barns-Graham, claims it happened to her and Lewis has appropriated her experience.

—Contrary to the mainstream claims, abstraction was introduced to St Ives not by the 'major artists' but by the much neglected and liberal as well as indefatigable Borlase Smart, whose contacts as a city Councillor and efforts earned St Ives Society The Mariner Church as their permanent gallery, (fig 104a) and the control over the maintenance, allocation and running of Porthmeor studios. His singularly liberal and autocratic ways of running the Society earned him both respect and criticism within different local groups. He struck a friendship with Wilhelmina and recognizing her talent arranged for her to work in Studio 3, while Colonel Bradshaw was away, he also urged her to introduce Ben and Barbara to him after which he invited them to exhibit with him and with SISA. It was also he who thought about a separate space of exhibiting the young moderns in the Crypt of the Mariner, which could not have been possible without his instigation and blessing.<sup>119</sup> The control and public respect that Smart exerted was so strong that after his death in 1947 the battle over local approval for the mass secession of artists from SISA was fought over the hypothetical approval that he might have given to it. The founder members of PSAC claimed that their actions were in accordance with Smart's wishes, and dedicated the new Society to his memory as well as courted his widow's statement of approval on her late husband's behalf. It was only when she conceded that it was PSAC and not SISA that represented Smart's catholic policies that the society won the local battle of public and civic approval.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, it is fair to conclude that while during the war years a distinction between the Carbis Bay group and the figurative practice of SISA artists was maintained, by 1945, with the dispersal of the Carbis Bay nucleus and with the return of the young men, the two camps came together for a short time, under the mediating activities of Borlase Smart, only to break-up in new separate configurations in St Ives after his death.

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<sup>119</sup> On this issue the memories and documents that I examined are conflicting. Lanyon's March 1949 account of events credits Smart with the initiative, later, from 1950 onwards he changes the account and credits all to himself. Having read the documents about Smart's mode of operation, Lanyon's earlier version seems more plausible.

Borlase Smart strategy can be described as attempting to unite through maintaining differences. This he physically maintained by 'allocating' separate exhibition spaces to the diverse artistic expressions: the traditionalists in the nave, the 'moderns' around the font, and the young aspiring generation, at the Crypt. This latter, generational division though presented as a unified group in *St Ives* in reality contained diverse practices. Only Peter Lanyon and John Wells adhered to non-figurative constructions and paintings. Sven Berlin, W. Barns-Graham, Bryan Wynter, and Patrick Heron painted at that time in a figurative mode of abstracted organic forms, while the printing of Guido Morris, in his adherence to classical typography can hardly be seen as a 'modern' printer (Appendix 4). If comparing the typeface of examples like *Cercle & Carré*, in 1929, (Appendix 7), or the layout of *Abstraction Création*, 1932 (Appendix 8), which in turn inspired *Circle*, 1937 in London (Appendix 5), or even the examples of the new typography that Tschichold presents<sup>121</sup> in his contribution to the publication (Appendix 6). It also inspired the designers of the St Ives poster, with the artists' names alphabetical arrangement (fig 2) as well as the more recent in a 1994 abstract art exhibition poster (Appendix 25).

While, internally the exhibiting group of 'The Crypt'<sup>122</sup> holds great emotive significance to its participant artists in the external evaluations it has attracted little critical attention, beyond the debate surrounding the unresolved question whether W. Barns-Graham was a founder member. Historically, Peter Lanyon was the first person to write and argue about the significance of 'The Crypt', gradually claiming for himself an increasing role as its leader, as well as claiming it to have offered a model and formula for PSAC to follow when it formed in 1949. Barns-Graham claims that the significance of The Crypt was in it having been the first time that a young generation of 'moderns' dared to exhibit *without* Ben

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<sup>120</sup> Information from the minutes of the society, TAM 76/1.

<sup>121</sup> *Circle* (1937) pp 252-255.

and Barbara, who were the King and Queen of the moderns in St Ives. But this generational separation came to an end with the founding of PSAC. By the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1949, when the New Society was founded, Ben and Barbara, were already leading separate personal lives, but maintained a solid unified professional front in relation to strategic manoeuvrings.<sup>123</sup> Their promotion of PSAC made it and them extremely visible in the national art world scene, and it is likely that the significance of *The Crypt* has had little detailed attention so far, as a result of being historically eclipsed by Barbara and Ben's well-connected support in London.

The 1985 catalogue's attempt to make modernism and St Ives into one predetermined unity means it is hard to recover and accept the ingredients of chance, reluctance and compromise that in reality made St Ives the home of Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, and turned it into the capital of British modernism during the 1950s.

### Theorizing exhibitions

Bal's reading focuses solely on meaning production of exhibitions and how an "[E]xposition is always an argument".<sup>124</sup> She decodes implicit meanings and is informed by the Foucauldian discourse of dominance and Bourdieu's analysis of symbolic capital that exposes how power structures operate between museum and exhibitions. Through semiotic reading, reliant on literary and linguistic deconstruction she stresses that:

[T]he aspect of museums that extends from the specific, literalized definition to a broader, partly metaphorical use of the idea of 'museum'. That aspect is a particular form of discursive behaviour, the posture or gesture of exposing. The discourse around which museums evolve, and which defines their primary function, is *exposition*. [She] examines the ambiguities involved in gestures of exposing; in gestures that point to things and seem to say: 'Look!' – often implying: 'That's how it is.' The

<sup>122</sup> As I will argue in more detail later, the status of the group that exhibited in the Crypt of the Mariner is still being debated, and hence has to be seen as a concept whose construction depends on the view of the various speakers and its interpreters.

<sup>123</sup> For example Ben Nicholson wrote letters to the Elmhursts, Dartington informing them about the society, and sending them all the printed publications. They in turn wrote back with thanks to be appointed as honorary members and duly send the fees for it.

<sup>124</sup> P. 2.



— 'Look!' aspect involves the visual availability of the exposed object. The 'That's how it is' aspect involves the authority of the person who knows: epistemic authority. The gesture of exposing connects these two aspects. The Possible discrepancy between the object that is present and the statement about it creates the ambiguities that [Bal] examine here.<sup>125</sup> —

Thus, Bal's account the interrelationship between museums and exhibition only sets the scene for her specific analysis of reading exhibitions. The connection between the two, in her scenario is a multimedial integrative space for the exposition discourse, which she keeps as distinct from each other as well as from language.<sup>126</sup> Her reading identifies three concurrent and interlinked kinds of expositions: "[the] museal exposition, the exposure of bodies in cultural artifacts, and the exposition of argument."<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, within any exposition she argues there are three interconnected aspects:

In expositions a 'first person,' the expositor, tells a 'second person,' the visitor, about a 'third person,' the object on display, who does not participate in the conversation. But unlike many other constative speech acts, the object, although mute, is present<sup>128</sup>

In this web of agencies Bal claims:

The thing on display comes to stand for something else, the statement about it. It comes to *mean*. The *thing* recedes into invisibility as its sign status takes precedence to make the statement.<sup>129</sup>

These aspects, while present in the exposition, are mute and often remain unnoticed by audiences possibly because "the object with and epistemology, anchored in a belief, almost tautologically referred to as positivist, that what you see must be real, true, present, or otherwise reliable."<sup>130</sup> Bal's notion of the ambiguous relationship between what is claimed to be factual and its epistemic authoritative discourse that uses objects as signs for the curators' argument, that offers me a paradigmatic frame work for another reading of *St Ives* as well as of the 1985 exhibition.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid P 2.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. P.3.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> p. 6

The concept of 'narrative structure' of exposition and how it functions in the 'emplotment' is central to Bal's argument; in particular in relation to how it operates to present itself accessible for easy consumption by audiences. It acts as analysis as well as an expository tool for making visible, unexamined assertions of exhibitions. Utilizing 'narrative structures' and emplotments that replicate those of mythologies are the means whereby arguments are being naturalized. Despite the circuitous argument of a need to use literary analysis in order to reveal a literary structure of emplotment, Bal effectively deciphers the communicative mechanism of exhibitions:

In semiotic terms, display is based on indexicality: it points to what is actually present. Thus it is bound up with three cultural 'habits' (Pierce) or unquestioned, because non-reflective, grounds on which the patterns of meaning can articulate themselves: expository agency, realism and vision.<sup>131</sup>

Bal's explication of the three 'habits' of 'expository agency, realism and vision', in semiotic terms, underpins the interconnectedness of the various stages of constructing meaning, presenting them as 'naturalized' by way of the authoritative expository agency which is supported by power structures, and the rhetoric of making the narrative accessible by the supremacy of 'realism' that is bound up with 'vision'.<sup>132</sup> The concept of 'expository agent' provides a theoretical underpinning to my earlier analytical examination of the mainstream narrative of St Ives as presented in the 1985 exhibition. It elucidates the mechanisms whereby women painters have been left out from the narrative as active artists rather than being cast as followers or being referred to mainly as important informants, as long as the information was not about their own art. Thus making them disappear as artists at the very instance of their most significant presence. Their voices, like a broken mobile phone line, is heard in a broken sequence, the silences in the case of women artists is always when their information related to their own artistic activity. Since, as Bal argues the 'expository agency'

is bound to subjects and embedded in power structure. Only those who are invested with cultural authority can be expository agents. For only such subjects are able to address an audience, routinely,

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. pp 7-8.

<sup>132</sup> Pp. 7-9.

— that is numerous and anonymous to the agent. This audience tends to go along with the assumed general meaning of the gesture of exposing: to believe, to appreciate, and to enjoy. Furthermore, only authoritative subjects have the material access to the objects of display required for the gesture to be truly indexical.<sup>133</sup>

Thus, expository agency is bound up with not only cultural authority, but more significantly with colonialism and patriarchy. It presents its own narrative and silences the 'third person'. In my reading, the 'third person' in this instance inhabits a low position in the hierarchy of power; it is objectified, being spoken for, at its absence. To follow the semiotic reading of Bal, I would claim it is a replication of global colonizing of what is termed as 'third world' on a personal level about the 'third person', for which women painters stand in the construction of *St Ives*. The semiotic reading of the concept of 'realism' is bound up with the traditional notion of art as mimesis via the double connotation of the meaning of the word *apo-deictic* acts for Bal as a reminder of the deceptiveness of a 'common-sensical' realism. Instead, Bal asserts:

The effect of the real, both in practice and also in its theoretical status, functions like a Freudian denial. Drawing attention to the reality status of the represented object, it obscures its precise, local meanings.<sup>134</sup>

In her analysis of realism as a misconceived rhetorical device in prehistoric displays and its verbal support Bal states:

The model addressee reads the panels as *complete* and as *accounts*. The combination of these two features describes the aesthetics at stake: realism, the description of a world so lifelike that omissions are unnoticed, elisions sustained, and repressions invisible.<sup>135</sup>

Bal asserts that though realism is always bound up with *vision* her project does not endorse an essentialist view of how these are connected. Instead, she maintains:

multiplying perspectives, proliferating points of view – may be a more useful strategy for examining the ideological, epistemological, and representational implications of dominating modes of vision, including their illusory monopoly in the domain of display.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> P. 8.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. p 9.

<sup>135</sup> Mieke Bal (2001) 'On Show: Inside the Ethnographic Museum', in *Looking in the Art of Viewing*. With Introduction by Norman Bryson p 137.

<sup>136</sup> Bal (1996) p 9.

The 'illusory monopoly' of display, is represented in my research by the politics of negotiating narratives for the 1985 exhibition and the refusal since then to accept any other perspective, but endorsing only those which accept the framework proposed then and are involved in refining details without intervention with the basic broad outlines proposed then. It thus would be accurate to claim that the 'St Ives' exhibition expressed a view that appears in a permanent and amplified way by the catalogue. Its intention might have been to describe the past, but it actually constructed a narrative that stands in an anachronistic relationship to the progressive artistic and intellectual expressions of its time. As such it is informative in a superficial and reductive way but is symptomatic on a deeper level of close analysis.

### **Exhibition and Catalogue**

Beyond the obvious observation of the catalogue being the documentation, the constant trace of the ephemeral exhibition, there are several additional ways in which a catalogue can be classed as a document. It is also, a document of the vision of the 'expository agency', as well as of its lineage within the evolution of the contemporary mega-catalogues of the blockbusters and also a contextual document of the cultural and political milieu of its time. For purposes of uncovering intentions, for archaeology of meaning construction the material configuration of the catalogue and its supporting documents in the Tate archive offer the most reliable trace of the '85 exhibition to be revisited and reassessed.

During the second half of the twentieth century exhibitions' catalogues have grown both in bulk and status in direct relation to the popularity of blockbusters exhibitions, a change that brought about a change in its consumption. These catalogues have increasingly become an opportune platform from which experts in the field conduct their debates. Its original function as an viewing reference has been replaced by information sheets, and the weighty catalogue, usually purchased when leaving the exhibition, is being read later away from the

exhibition.—With this temporal and spetial deferral of the consumption of the catalogue's text, the exhibition's narrative has become a layered exercise of memories: The construction of the topic being displayed, as well as a reliance on the viewer's power of recall when reading the catalogue.<sup>137</sup> The format of the *St Ives* 1985 exhibition, its expanse of articles, illustrations, chronology, biographies and illustrations, locates the catalogue at the early stages of the 'bulking of the catalogue' process.

Much has been done in the display of the exhibition and in the catalogue's text to heighten the aspect of realism. Historically, it was the first exhibition in the UK to display documents alongside the purely aesthetic exhibits. In the catalogue that realism is enhanced in two kinds of texts: the 'eye-witness' account of David Lewis, 'Memoir', as well as the chronologies, biographies and texts supported by a wealth of photographs. On a simplistic level they reinforce assertions of truth<sup>138</sup>. But the relationship of the photographs to the art reproductions is one of a tautological tension and mutual referencing that delineates an endless vicious circle of deferred causality. It moves from fact to imagination, from documentation to interpretation, without ever settling on either.

### Gendered catalogue

The sub-section 'Before 1939' of *St Ives* Catalogue<sup>139</sup> probably has been inserted to accommodate and historically substantiate Bowness's requirement to focus on exclusive individuals of importance. The section offers a preamble, an introduction of the forerunners of and early encounters with St Ives. The 'major figure' of this section is the legendary Alfred Wallis (1855-1942)<sup>140</sup> but not without setting the scene for the otherness and

<sup>137</sup> See the two volume exhibition catalogue of the NY MOMA *Modern Art and Primitivism*. [bibliog.]

<sup>138</sup> For the argument about photographs and their status as 'new regime of truth' see John Tagg (1988) 'Evidence, Truth and Order: Photographic Records and the Growth of the State' pp 60-65 in *The Burden of Representation*. Macmillan.

<sup>139</sup> *St Ives* (1985) pp 149-160.

<sup>140</sup> Of 38 paintings listed 20 are by Wallis.

traditionalist-aspects of St Ives. It is into this scene that Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood are inserted in the dual role of influence and superiority. The section's introduction opens with the highly mythologized 1928 visit to St Ives and the 'discovery' of Alfred Wallis,<sup>141</sup> the connotation of which is that the place and Wallis were imbued with significance by virtue of this visit/discovery. This marking of significance and utility of what was perceived as peripheral to the economic and political centre, replicates internally the colonial imposition on Other cultures and imposing their hierarchy of value and usefulness.<sup>142</sup> Winifred Nicholson's presence at the 1928 visit is omitted from the subsection and was mentioned only as an owner of paintings by Alfred Wallis.<sup>143</sup> While figuration by the 'traditionalist' was ridiculed by the 'moderns' Wallis's kind of figuration was upheld as a model and inspiration.<sup>144</sup> The catalogue does however signal out three 'conservative' artists for their "modified way, did something to help the adventurous young." Of these John Park (1880-1962) is seen as the most advanced modernist in St "before Nicholson's arrival in 1939."<sup>145</sup> A brief biographical mention of John Tunnard (1900-1971), evades the conflict between the curator's preferred construction of 'St Ives' and the presence of Surrealist driven abstractions in the region. Tunnard's marginalizations in the catalogue is explained away by the fact that he had "chosen the relative isolation of West Cornwall."<sup>146</sup> Mary Jewels (1886-1977) is the only woman artist in this section. She stands for Cornish-Born, compared to Wallis in her lack of formal art training, but unlike him it is claimed had substantial support from established male artists: Cedric Morris, Augustus John and Christopher Wood. She is also singled out for her social connections as the sister in law of Frank Dobson, and belonging to the social circle of Ben Nicholson. It

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p 149.

<sup>142</sup> I am referring here in particular to the way that French colonial ruling over North African countries divided the territory to 'useful' and 'useless' regions, for their own purposes, rather than from the perspective of nomadic cultural life there.

<sup>143</sup> *St Ives* (1985) p 149.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. "Wallis's work was not appreciated by the general run of academic painters of St Ives, who in the 1930s were strongly conservative by temperament and hostile to modernism." p 149.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p 149.

is only in the 'biographical notes' that the last sentence states that she was a member of SISA and a founder member of PSAC. It is therefore questionable why she was positioned in the restrictive pre-1939 section rather placed in her rightful full historical sequences of involvement. Mary Jewels was represented by two works in the exhibition catalogue (of 100 listed works in total), both are illustrated: *Cornish Landscape*, c. 1940-1950 in colour (fig 22) and *Cornubia*, c. 1940-1950,<sup>147</sup> in black and white. The selection of paintings, their positioning and discrepancies between the dates of the work and the section 'pre-1939', all indicate that she has been subjected to a historical appraisal, as well as her being used as an index for the feminised perception of the region prior to the arrival of the moderns. In the catalogue of the first exhibition of PSAC, Jewels is listed as showing two works.<sup>148</sup>

### The absence of Winifred Nicholson

While Mary Jewels has been misrepresented Winifred Nicholson has been omitted altogether as an artist from the pre-1939 section. The argument that the war years were the significant phase for 'St Ives' and that by then Winifred was living in Banks Head, Cumbria, are mere 'distancing' arguments that were not applied to C. Wood (who committed suicide in 1930) and to Alfred Wallis (who died in 1942). The question to address here, even if only a hypothetical answer is possible, is what could have been the reasons for the erasure of Winifred Nicholson from the pre-1939 story of 'St Ives'.

Winifred, Ben Nicholson's first wife (1920-1932), was according to him one of the most important influences in formulating his artistic direction during the 1920s. At the time they met, she graduated from the Byam Shaw School of Art and exhibited at the Royal Academy

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. pp 149-150.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. (cat. No 3) p 150.

<sup>148</sup> *St Ives* (1985) cat. no.51 *Farms at St Just* and no. 59. *Sancreed. Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall, First Exhibition* (summer 1949). St Ives: James Lanham Limited in collaboration with Guido Morris. TA 8117.

as well as selling her work.<sup>149</sup> As a student her childhood fascination with colour was extended to the use and understanding of the Pre-Raphaelites' colour harmonies and their use, an interest that was furthered independently as a postgraduate during her visit to India and Burma with her father (fig 4). The sketches and watercolours of her Indian Sketchbook indicate her fascination with a different light intensity she experienced in the East, combined with both her interest in colour as well as an astute eye and mind in learning and understanding different cultural formulation of composition, spatial depiction, colour harmonies and volume that she had encountered during her visit.<sup>150</sup> This interest of Winifred Roberts at the time can be inserted into two genealogies, the personal as well as the Western cultural interest at the time in extra European examples, where the colour scheme and tonal allocations are a merger of both the influences of the Indian subcontinent and Paul Gauguin's examples, as an act of anti-academic intent as well as a search for a means of revitalizing the European picturing tradition, through a wide range of Primitivism.

A detailed comparison of Ben Nicholson's work prior meeting and marrying Winifred in 1920, with his subsequent work, especially during the first three years of their marriage and life in Catagnola, Switzerland, reveals beyond doubt the influence that Winifred had on her husband who at the time only dabbled in painting, without any clear idea other than a bitter competition with and against his father the established Edwardian father William Nicholson. This pictorial evidence is incomplete, for much of the paintings that Ben painted at the time have been destroyed by him at a later stage, especially figure paintings that both Winifred

<sup>149</sup> For Byam Shaw's art and theories see pp 66-71 in Tim Barringer (2000) 'Not a "Modern" as the world is now understood?' pp 64-83, in David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (eds.) *English Art 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity*, The Barber Institute's Critical Perspectives in Art History Series, Manchester University Press.

<sup>150</sup> She wrote in 'London Exhibition – New Vision' (n.d.) "Ben was exploring the New Vision in every direction. I was exploring new thinking – in India I had read the Vedas, studied the Hindu and Buddhist writers, and Lao-tze." Reprinted in Andrew Nicholson, (1987) *Unknown Colour*, London, Faber and Faber, p 39.



and Ben refer to in their letters as "Titans"<sup>151</sup> as well as Ben's recognition at his inferior stage of development in formulating a pictorial equivalent to his expressive intention, by comparison to Winifred's accomplished achievements.<sup>152</sup> Ben listed Winifred as one of his most significant influences at that early stage when she guided their exploration of defining their primitivizing expressions. The emphasis on Barbara and Ben's joint venture and their over mythologized visits to France where they were claimed to have met various French avant-garde painters, needs to be adjusted and corrected with the re-inscription of Winifred into that phase of shift from figurative modernism to non-figurative one. Winifred's impact on the formation of Ben at the second stage, when he defines his geometric white relief works, is of a double impact: first, her indefatigable believe and interpretation of Christian Science, secondly, her choice of making her home in Paris after Ben moved to live with Barbara.

The various waves of Winifred's influences on Ben Nicholson are hesitantly mentioned in various prestigious monographs about him. Lynton, in his discussions about Ben's landscapes of 1927-8, gives a tentative, brief and underdeveloped acknowledgement to Winifred with this short statement that observed that [Ben's] "broad treatment of landscape forms and space may owe something to Winifred..."<sup>153</sup> Despite Lynton's postulating with the word 'may' he all the same repeats similar observation in his discussion about the window-sills compositions of arranging still-life against landscape, which Ben Nicholson revived in the 40s in Carbis Bay, as Lynton concedes, a return to Winifred's paintings of the 20s.<sup>154</sup> Few hesitant comments attest to a need of modification of the narrative that

<sup>151</sup> Letters from 1923, Ibid., pp 63-64.

<sup>152</sup> In a letter dated 3 April 1923, he writes: "I don't yet seem to have painted the suitable landscape for my very fierce people to walk about in.... We are having a show at a small gallery in Bond (filthy) St. begins May 23. Winifred's very sensitive flowers on one wall and my fierce blunderbusts on the other." Ibid., p 64.

<sup>153</sup> Norbert Lynton (1993) *Ben Nicholson*, Oxford, Phaidon, p 54.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid* p.178.

stresses Ben and Barbara venture in Paris. In his most outright and unconditional sentence about Winifred's rôle, Lewison states:

However, the fact that Nicholson executed the first reliefs in Paris is not only a testimony to the influence of the group of artists that were now his friends, but also to the continuing importance of Winifred who, at the same time, began to paint abstractly and with whom he enjoyed long discussions about art.<sup>155</sup>

But reading these hindsight-begrudging acknowledgements of Nicholson's scholars, against the letters that Ben wrote at the time to Winifred a completely different evaluation of dependency to her model and introductions emerges. Winifred set herself up at the centre of the modernist avant-garde capital at the time and her stay in Paris during 1932-38, was not a time of retreat and isolation, but on the contrary a time of involvement and full engagement with the non-figurative community of artists. In her wartime article 'Mes amis – les Français' she acknowledges the impact that the Parisian art community had on the English artists: "You know that our inspiration came from your Paris, from Paris which was between the wars the centre of the world of art – your Paris was our Mecca, our Rome, our Jerusalem, our Paris – in fact what have we done without Paris?"<sup>156</sup> The article gives a vivid image to her involvement and socializing as well as interactive involvement with the abstractionists.<sup>157</sup> In her article 'Paris in the 1920s and 1930s', written in 1975 for her first and only exhibition of abstract works at the Kalman Gallery, London, she recalls that in the 1930s she discarded the:

Pre-Raphaelite romance – copying the visual world of appearance – and with fond delight traced with a compass and set square proportions that leapt out of the canvas unexpected to my thought and to my eye. The work was experimental – I did not know where it would lead – but it delighted me.<sup>158</sup>

The self-deprecatory tone about her own involvements and achievement is typical of Winifred's generosity and conscientious support of other artists. But Ben did not hesitate to

<sup>155</sup> Jeremy Lewison (1993) *Ben Nicholson*, exhibition catalogue, London, Tate Gallery, p 216.

<sup>156</sup> Andrew Nicholson (1987) *Op. Cit.* p 118.

<sup>157</sup> The De Stijl artist Cezar Domela "was giving her [Winifred] lessons in abstract art" write Hammer and Lodder (2000), information from interview with Domela, p 225, p 492n141.

<sup>158</sup> Andrew Nicholson (1987) p 106.

stress more than once her generosity of spirit and support. In a letter written from Hampstead in 1932 discussing his forthcoming visit to see her and their children after his exhibition closes (Dec 3) In an elated mood he writes:

The New developments are my *first real* expression and so very very much of it is due to you – there is a CLEAR LIGHT in several and some v. simple living things which you have especially given me.... I feel that light when I have found it has come especially from you...<sup>159</sup>

It was during this stay over Christmas that Ben Nicholson made his first relief, and started with his new pure geometrical language of squares and circles.<sup>160</sup> Ben recognized he had found a new formula that could be explored further and wrote an ecstatic letter of gratitude to Winifred:

The photographs standing on the mantelpiece & pinned up have a real *depth* & severe beauty – all in circles of light - & triangle & simple shapes. They are actually made & constructed by light passing – not by objects - & they are *real*. A big advance on Moholy-Nagy.<sup>161</sup>

It is not clear what he refers to in this statement. But extrapolating from the habit of Winifred Ben and Christopher Wood habit of exchanging photographs of work, it is likely that he describes a photograph of Winifred's early non-figurative painting, since at the time neither he nor Hepworth used triangles as one of their shapes, but Winifred did (figs. 26, 37,38).<sup>162</sup>

Ben also writes in the same letter, dated Dec 30 [1933] in clear and unambiguous term:

I have felt you have been working today – on the same translucent aeroplane ideas. I hope you did such a lovely thing, dear? You gave me so much, such a dear sweet generous giving thing – *so a push to my work & to the new idea we are all so excited about*. I think your contribution to this idea is going to be transcendent – that aeroplane flying has an absolute fascination for me.... Bless you my dear & thank you many times for your help with those circle ideas – *a real & lovely help*.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p 141.

<sup>160</sup> His earlier geometrical non-figurative attempt during 1924-6, were in all probability based on collages that he then painted, and the painterly touch as well as the uneven edges of the forms contain more of the Bloomsbury mood than the new technological or architectural inspired forms.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p 142.

<sup>162</sup> I inserted a question mark after the dates, as is universally done, to Winifred Nicholson's paintings, especially those of her Paris period. According to Andrew Nicholson, her son, the whole family joined in deciding the paintings' dates before she sent them to be exhibited. But the issue is even more acute in relation to her abstract paintings. If we were to believe the dating now circulating in catalogues, then she did not paint between 1932 and 1935 – and her abstract paintings are all clustered after Ben Nicholson's famous circles paintings. This supposition seems most unlikely to me. Winifred Nicholson's abstract painting dating was carried out for the first time during the mid 1970s prior to her first abstract paintings exhibition.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p 143.

To sum up my argument here, there is a clear difference of evaluation of Winifred's in the making of Ben Nicholson, between what he perceived as help at the time, and how it has been minimized, to an extent by Ben but much more so by his monographers. Despite their marginalizations, Winifred emerges as the influence on his passage from academic dark painting to light palette, to primitivisms, to reinterpretations of these in spiritual terms of light in the sense understood by Christian Science, which aided at the last resort to make the final leap to geometric white relief works. If as I claim here, Winifred has been so important in the making of Ben Nicholson and since she has been with him and Wood in Cornwall for sure, but also in all probability in St Ives during the encounter with Alfred Wallis, how come she has been totally expunged from the exhibition and catalogue of *St Ives*?

Ben Nicholson's first visit to Cornwall was when he joined the Roberts, Winifred's family, on their holiday in Polpero in the summer of 1919. On their 1928 summer holiday in Feock she painted *Fishing Boat, Feock* (fig 12), and in all probability was with Ben and Christopher in St Ives on that famous 'Wallis-discovery' trip.<sup>164</sup> When Ben left St Ives she stayed behind with Wood (fig 24). During the early period of their marital break-up Winifred sought refuge with their three children in Par, prior to her stay in Paris. After the war, especially from the date that Kate Nicholson, their daughter moved there, (1956) Winifred was a regular visitor to St Ives, where she painted and had numerous artistic and Christian Science friends. And yet, in *St Ives* there is a listing of dates that link of Kate Nicholson to Cornwall<sup>165</sup> while Winifred's presence in the catalogue is restricted to her role

<sup>164</sup> He reluctantly admitted that when I interviewed him. He implied that it was a known fact within the family, but that they preferred to remain silent about various errors in the published histories of the family. This reluctant information still has to be considered in relation to Winifred's own writing about the event. She states that the two men discovered Wallis. See A. Nicholson (1987), p. 93.

<sup>165</sup> *St Ives* (1985) 'Biographical Notes', p 136.

as a spouse and doubles as a model for Wood's depiction in his *The Fisherman's Farewell*, 1928.<sup>166</sup>

So why is she absent from *St Ives*?<sup>167</sup> Explaining it only as a gendered bias would in this case not tell the whole story. In her case there is also the issue of the avant-garde and class behaviour determining her long-suffering understanding and despite her reluctance to 'misbehave' either publicly or privately. Refusing initially to grant him a divorce or to live in a *ménage à trios*, she forged for herself an independent life in Paris, where Ben came sporadically to visit her and their three young children and immersed herself in the Parisian avant-garde and painting non-figurative paintings. Only with the birth of Ben and Barbara triplets did she concede to a divorce, but even then her professional contacts with Ben continued.<sup>168</sup> As Andrew Nicholson has pointed out, Winifred and the whole family subsequently, treated St Ives as the homestead and domain of Barbara, and retreat from making any claims that Winifred shares any claim to the making of 'St Ives'. And yet, a tacit admission that Winifred has a stake at the construct of that British modernism was a solo, memorial exhibition held at Penwith Society in 1981, after Winifred's death.

Hepworth is the only woman to be attributed a central creative role in *St Ives 1939-64* catalogue, and remains an undisputed pivotal artist in the construction of the St Ives group. In its incorporation of 'major' woman artist within the avant-garde 'St Ives' is one of the exceptions to the masculinist rule initially defined by Carol Duncan and revisited by Lisa

<sup>166</sup> *St Ives* (1985) she is mentioned in pp 21, 31, 99, 135, 136, 146, 149, 152, 159. For a reading of the painting see Matthew Rowe (1996) 'The Fisherman's Farewell' in Andre Cariou and Michael Tooby, Christopher Wood, *A Painter Between Two Cornwalls*, Tate Gallery Publications, p 31.

<sup>167</sup> When I posed this same question to Alan Bowness he initially answered with indignant surprise at the suggestion that she ought to be included. But when I put it to him that by comparison to the time that Rothko had spent in St Ives she surely deserved at least as much mention, he couldn't stop himself from seeing the funny side of my argument and burst in laughter.

<sup>168</sup> A large collection of their correspondence is now held in various archives, mainly in Kettle's Yard, Tate Archive, and Dartington.

Tickner.<sup>169</sup> Apart from her, predictably, the category of 'major figure' is reserved for male practitioners, a notion that is metonymically expressed in a collage of Hepworth surrounded by men artists (fig 30), where despite her small scale being different and at the centre semiotically stands for the eternal Other. Hepworth's success was mainly of personal consequences, as for her position in relation to other women, or to the Artwriting consideration of other women, her example served as tokenism whereby an illusion of equality was created and supported by an erroneous impression of adequately inclusion and therefore, as if needed inclusion of no other women artists.

The little coverage that younger women painters were given, was at best as disciples of the senior or imitators of the junior men artists. Unlike men artists of their generation, they were not credited with having outgrown the stage of dependency. Almost every single decision in their private lives and professional one are described as prompted by men, be it parents, teachers, partners, husbands or their friends. Artistic inspiration is forever ascribed as flowing in one way direction, from male to female, no matter how senior in age or professional experience the woman artist might be. It is as if the other way flow, that a men artist is appropriating a woman's work, is either unimaginable in the Artwriting, or else is the influence that cannot be named. Following their institutional marginalizations, women painters working within 'St Ives' have hardly been considered critically, their dismissal seems to be determined a priori without a need to collate a comparative list of the dates of what the artists painted. Other than thin leaflets, hardly any of the women painters had as yet a comprehensive survey of their art, let alone a detailed critical catalogue.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Lisa Tickner (1994) 'Men's Work? Masculinity and Modernism' in N. Bryson, M. Ann Holly and K. Moxey (eds.) *Visual Culture: Images and its interpretations*, Hanover and London, University Press of New England.

<sup>170</sup> Except for W. Barns-Graham who commissioned Lynn Green to write a monograph about her. Green, Lynne (2001) *W. Barns-Graham, A studio Life*, London, Lund Humphries. But as important as this lavish publication is, it is more of a first chronology than either a catalogue raisonn   or a critical study.

In a hindsight disclaimer—that Charles Harrison presented in a conference paper—and later published he refuted his original claims about aesthetic superiority of Ben Nicholson and stated that he had come to recognize aesthetic superiority of Gwen John's art.<sup>171</sup> But a couple of years after the paper he published yet another book on Ben Nicholson and not on Gwen John, it is He who is the stuff on which reputations are being made, not She. But, Winifred Nicholson, Mary Jewels, Margaret Mellis, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Marlow Moss, Miriam Gabo, (whose art has all but become invisible), Margo Maecelsbergh, Rose Hilton, Sandra Blow, Thelma Hulbert, and Prunella Clough to name but few, are still awaiting basic collation and documentation of their work. Hepworth's acclaim has situated her differently and in opposition to both her male colleagues and other women artists.<sup>172</sup> Hepworth's twelve years difference from Gabo's age is not considered as casting her as his artistic junior in the way that her seniority of 12 years to Mellis' did impact. Equally the nine years difference between Hepworth and Nicholson are deemed relatively minor compared to the same age gap between Hepworth and Barns-Graham. Another significant variant was the often uneasy relationship between Hepworth and other women painters, in Douglas Hall words she has claimed for herself a position of "one undisputed Queen' in St Ives",<sup>173</sup> despite Hepworth's claim that "We women must stick together."<sup>174</sup>

Women painters' work was given only a limited exposure in *St Ives*, while the discussion about them was distorted in information, restrictive in interpretation, and denied any independent voice, choice or subjectivity. Other than Hepworth no woman artist was acknowledged with individuated expression, but their lives and professional attainments are

<sup>171</sup> Harrison, Charles (July 1997) 'Looking Back and Going On' at *Rethinking Englishness: English Art 1880-1940*, University of York. Conference paper. Harrison, Charles (1999) ' "Englishtness" and "Modernism" Revisited'. *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Jan 99, 75-90.

<sup>172</sup> See P. Florence (1995) 'Barbara Hepworth: The Odd Man Out?' in D. Thistlewood (ed) *Barbara Hepworth Reconsidered*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press pp 23-42 for strategies available to a woman modernist. Also Katy Deepwell about the critical reception of Hepworth in the same volume.

<sup>173</sup> Douglas Hall (1989) *W. Barns-Graham Retrospective: 1940-1989*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Museums and Art Galleries, p 3.

perceived as either 'chaperoned' by men, or being of a lesser standard than the-men or the single exceptional woman sculptress.

### **Primitivism- or the uses and abuse of Wallis**

If avant-garde self-identity is underpinned by a masculinist project of defining self against the Other, the Others in St Ives case were not just women but also 'primitive' self-taught artists. Alfred Wallis, in the catalogue, stands as a sign for untutored, 'unspoiled' expression, and functions as a double trope of 'primitivism', which has since become highly commodified (fig 27).<sup>175</sup> His almost illiterate, low working class status as well as the romance of his past involvement with the dying industry of fishing prompted the elaboration of him as a mariner, as the inscription on his grave declares. These attributes embodied a set of primordial qualities which the peninsula signified in the 'moderns' imagination. By contrast, the Cornish-born artist Mary Jewels, who was self-taught and defined as 'naïve' painter, attracted little critical attention.<sup>176</sup> While their artistic impetus had some parallels, there were significant differences between Wallis and Jewels. She was born and lived in Newlyn where she met many artists through her brother-in-law the sculptor F. Dobson. In 1918, as a young widow Cedric Morris encouraged her, to take up painting. During and after the war-years Ben Nicholson frequently visited her and expressed his appreciation of her art.<sup>177</sup> But unlike in the case of Wallis, a different cluster of connections is ascribed to Jewels art. While Wallis because of his gender, class and previous profession, serves as a 'magnificent exception' to his gender, against whose Otherness the moderns could define themselves, Jewels's Otherness - as often is the case with the category of woman as Other –

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<sup>174</sup> Barns-Graham in interview, 5.6.96.

<sup>175</sup> A recent display in Tate Britain shop tastfully arranged reproduction of Wallis painting as kites hats and the image itself. Photographed in October 2002.

<sup>176</sup> See Denys Val Baker (1985) 'Primitive Visions', *Country Life*, 16 August, Newlyn. And Newlyn exhibition 1977.

<sup>177</sup> Information, interview with Barns-Graham 10.6.1996.



was made to disappear.<sup>178</sup> Wallis's model is a gendered inversion of the model of the 'magnificent exception' concept, which usually is applied to women who are perceived as unusually gifted. Wallis's 'Primitivism' operates as a useful Other by being highly feminised, in the claims of his creativity as a function of spontaneity, which traditionally has been a concept naturalised to women's creativity. Wallis therefore stands for the local, male spontaneity that expresses modular insights in his art, a natural treasure to be guarded, in other words, to be patronised.<sup>179</sup> By contrast, as her photograph indicates, Jewels was a stylish woman, and as the sister in law of Frank Dobson, was well connected to the local advanced art world.<sup>180</sup> She would fit awkwardly to the category of 'primitive' because of her class, and social milieu. Instead, by defining her as a 'naïve' artist, the notion of her being civilised remains intact, but with the connotation of not having attained a high degree of sophistication. The distinction creates polar opposites of class and gender; to Wallis's ennobled primitive she provides an index of the civilized but intellectually less capable naive woman.

The myth of Alfred Wallis serves both symbolic and economic purposes. He represents for the 'moderns' the equivalent of the role that the Noble Savage served for the 18<sup>th</sup> century enlightened colonising practice. Both admired, adulated but patronised with an eye for economic profit. It still remains an unanswerable question why this patronising amazement still survives despite the proliferation of post-colonial discourse.<sup>181</sup> In this context it is important to stress that most of the individuals identified as 'major' artists of 'St Ives' did not have any institutional or established art education. In that sense, in 1928 Wallis also

<sup>178</sup> On 'structure-Other' and the implication of the disappearance of the 'Other' see Dorothea Olkowski (1999) *Gilles Deleuze: and the Ruin of Representation*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pp. 36-39.

<sup>179</sup> Margaret Mellis TAV 272 AB pp 57-59.

<sup>181</sup> Though in recent years there has been evidence of a shift to slightly more critical assessment of Wallis's 'primitivism'. See Matthew Gale (1999) 'Artistry, authenticity and the Work of James Dixon and Alfred

provided an encouragement—and an indirect self-promotion for Ben and Christopher's professional ambitions, as much as it set the same example, almost twenty years later for the aspiring young generation during the post world war years. This assumption works on the basis of set hierarchies of value in Western art, whereby primitivism of spontaneity and a-historical representation has become a factually misguided but all the same a powerful discourse.<sup>182</sup> The fact that Wallis and his wife run marine shops in Penzance and in St Ives (fig 29) at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. points to a high probability that he must have been part of vernacular decorative paintings, such as marine objects, or sign paintings that were then still a living tradition.<sup>183</sup> Presumably, equipped with this background and encouraged by the vibrant presence of artistic activities in the art colony in St Ives it was for him but a small transference of experience that needed but small adjustment, namely painting on found surfaces rather than on second hand marine objects.

There is a gap between facts and claims of what modernist qualities did Wallis fulfil for the 'moderns' in their unflinching admiration. With the over-emphasis attributed to abstraction in 'St Ives' the literalness of Wallis's depictions seems to belong to an altogether different expressive mode. Primitivism and 'imposed surrealism' are two expressive qualities contained in his paintings that would appeal to the cultural affinity of the late 1920s and revisited in the 1940s. The art of Wallis stands explicitly for aspects of the Noble Savage, and tacitly for its raw spontaneity and chance - in the shapes of the boards on which he painted - that offered for the sophisticated viewer, as surrealists believed, a direct expression, an innocence that was oblivious to and different from civilized expressions, which were more of cultural refinement than true expression of the subconscious. Chance is

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Wallis' in exhibition catalogue *Two Painters: Works by Alfred Wallis and James Dixon*, London, Merrell Holberton, in association with Irish Museum of Modern Art and Tate Gallery St Ives, pp 16-26.

<sup>182</sup> The literature on the subject is extensive and it will suffice here to mention only the debate that surrounded the Primitivism exhibition at MOMA and the debate in precisely these terms that it provoked. Most famously Hal Foster's article 'The Primitive Unconscious'

applied in two contexts to Wallis, one intrinsic to his work the other extrinsic,—the so narrated, chance discovery of him by Ben and Christopher Wood, the other, the claim that he painted on whatever shape of ground he came across, which are retained in the irregular shapes of his paintings, and held an aesthetic, almost iconic value for his collectors.<sup>184</sup> In a way these are tropes of chance, linking it to the Surrealists valued notion of both chance meeting of culturally incongruous objects, as well as the serendipity of the *objet trouvé*.

The controlled patronizing of Wallis is an indication to the degree to which he became commodified and the degree to which Symbolic Capital was invested in his myth. The patronising of Wallis did not express itself solely in the purchasing and selling frenzy amongst a small circle of friends, but even in attempts of controlling his art, by making sure that none of his benefactors supplied him with colours that did not belong to his 'original' range. Such a control aimed at ensuring that his painting did not change from their initially encountered configuration and thereby securing that for the constant and volatile 'modern' he remained the unchanging a-historical 'primitive'. Wallis's initial colour range was restricted by the preferred hues used in local boat and gates paints, therefore his use of blue/grey/green was not one of choice and preference, but a result of availability. Under the watchful eyes of his admirers, the economic restriction became an 'aesthetically' controlled one. Wallis's painting from his last years, when hospitalised in Madron Public Assistance Institution, contain warm, red and brown earth colours are indicative of his own preference for and delight in experimenting in different and wider range of colours. Patronising Wallis in this way was an attempt to stop him from changing evolving or having the freedom of expression. Another, though related aspect of control over the meaning of or the Symbolic Capital contained within Wallis was the battle for the control over his biography.

<sup>183</sup> None of the publications about Wallis that I have come across has taken this line of research. For my own argument here it is only an observation and not central to my thesis.

<sup>184</sup> In letters to collectors Ben Nicholson warns that the shapes of the ground must not be touched or corrected.

When Sven Berlin wrote an article about Wallis after his death, and intended to publish it *Horizon* in 1942, Ben Nicholson made sure that he wrote one too and that it appeared alongside Berlin's in 1943, after having failed to convince Adrian Stokes from dissuading Sven from writing the article altogether.<sup>185</sup> Apart from the Other, the Primitive that Wallis offered as an English counterpart for the Cubists' Rousseau, he also was an affirmative example for the paradigm of the untutored intuitive genius. An important paradigm, since being untutored in a traditional way, became part of the ethos of 'St Ives' artists, most of whom were untutored. Wallis who was an artist on whom Nature has bestowed the rarest gift, not to know that he is one' as the Gabos' put it in their funerary floral tribute,<sup>186</sup> was an ideal father figure for the 'St Ives'. Unlike others his art remained static, left to be sold and promoted by others, and after his death could be articulated a useful manner for the 'moderns' purposes. At the time that women made headway in their attempts to become respectable professional, Wallis was indexical to the feminization of the male artist, but his vulnerability could be presented as unique that at the same time showed up the 'major figures' in even more favourable light.

### **Mellis and Barns-Graham – an intervention**

The issue that has been erased from the catalogue is how the absence of women painters is positioned in relation to the double contexts of male artists working under the cultural and political cloud of threatened masculinity, coupled by the feminising of the art practice. Thus their absence from the canon of 'St Ives, I argue, is not just yet another illustration to Carol Duncan's thesis of the dominant culture's inability to recognise women as founders and original creators, but in this particular case it is confounded by socio-psychological conditions of biographical, national, and international nature. An equally complex configuration operated in relation to women painters as the one I have outlined above in

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<sup>185</sup> This extraordinary request brought about a rift in the relationship of Stokes and Nicholson.

relation to the hierarchical web of 'primitivism' operating tacitly on inter and explicitly on intra gendered trajectories.

The specific conditions of production for women artists need to be inserted into the broader mapping of modernism in Penwith. In addition, Mellis and Barns-Graham were marginalized in the catalogue as examples of eternal disciples of the 'older generation', or copyists of their own men colleagues. This positioning mirrors that of the Mary Jewels's in relation to Wallis, where privileged class and education was considered as a specific disadvantage on top of the naturalized limitations inscribed unto their (gendered) art. All biographical facts were used to belittle their artistic output. Their age, was used to exclude them from being considered as part of the older, already established, generation, but having a diploma made them outsiders from the so called 'middle generation'.<sup>187</sup> In a curious way, their 'in-between' situation in relation to age and professionalism, made them fall between two stools as in the Artwriting of *St Ives* they belong to neither.

Margaret Mellis, features in the catalogue mainly in the role of a wife and hostess (mentioned 14 times),<sup>188</sup> and as an informant about the early days at Little Park Owle contrary to her role (especially her adherence to abstraction since 1940). The degree to which a blind eye and deaf ear were turned to the women painter's subjecthood is manifest in a clear fashion in the 1981 interviewing tapes and transcripts kept at the Tate Archive. Time and again, both Mellis and Barns-Graham are being asked to impart information about their male colleagues, for which they readily offer information. But whenever they either modified the question or attempted to discuss their own art or experience, their comments were cut short, and whatever information they did depart in relation to their art did not

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<sup>186</sup> Sven Berlin (1949) p 8; SIT 11.9.42.

<sup>187</sup> In my research I did not come across any ridicule of Bryan Wynter for having a diploma, while Barns-Graham and Mellis did.

<sup>188</sup> *St Ives* (1985) pp 21,22,24,25, 99,100,101, 102, 103, 115.

appear in the published catalogue.—As individuals they disappear amidst their very presence—and emerge only in the footnotes and asides as informants about others, implying that their sole value had been to witness the men's art. Mellis's persistent effort to explain the difficult conditions in Little Park Owles for the first six months,<sup>189</sup> shed a completely different light on the image of a united group working away together on abstractions.

Mellis, who practiced abstraction after 1940, and Barns-Graham's advanced style and eventual abstraction, have indeed been subjected to a quadrupled marginalisation: for their gender, within the 'moderns' for their age, in St Ives for adhering to abstract paintings, and finally in the critical literature for working within the avant-garde that already had its token-woman, Hepworth. Wilhelmina Barns-Graham has remarked on the influence that Hepworth's single-minded dedication and work-ethic had on her professionalism, but neither she nor Mellis concedes to having derived any artistic inspiration from Hepworth. In that respect, both painters stress the debt they owe to Ben Nicholson. At Carbis Bay Ben Nicholson encouraged Margaret Mellis to make abstract collages. After his separation from Barbara in 1949 Ben became an intimate friend of Wilhelmina Barns-Graham and her husband David Lewis. During this time they regularly went out for sketching expeditions, he wrote for her introduction letters for artists in Paris, and promoted her work amongst his friends in London whenever she exhibited there during the 1950s. Wilhelmina acknowledges to have been influenced by his use of tinted paper for sketching, but William Gear claimed that Ben appropriated Barns-Graham's habit of softening the lines of her drawing by way of smudging them.<sup>190</sup> Gabo's tacit example was the greatest influence on both artists. Their adoption of abstraction included Mellis and Barns-Graham with their peers' exhibiting policies and strategies, with Mellis being included in the 1942 *New*

<sup>189</sup> TAV 272 AB; 7817.6; and my interviews and conversations with the artist.

<sup>190</sup> He claimed that time and again according to Clare Stacey from Art First Gallery London. According to William Gear she already used to smudge her outlines for atmospheric effect as a student.

*Movements in Art*, exhibition in London with Ben's selection of her work for the constructivist section, and Barns-Graham becoming in St Ives 'one of the boys' an integral part of the group that made up *The Crypt*, as well as being one of the original founders members of PSAC.

The issue of commitment to abstract or figurative had implicated avant-garde affiliations on one hand and impacted economic survival on the other. Commitment to abstraction decreased their immediate ability to survive from selling their paintings, as the local market in the early days was buoyant only for figurative paintings, as were national museums at the time. As for the commercial galleries and private collectors, these were tightly guarded by and for the 'middle generation' under the nationalistic sentiment that the boys needed all the support to compensate for their lost and traumatic war years. On one occasion T. Frost justified to Wilhelmina his commercial aggression by his determination to provide for his sons. By implication, her elected preference of artistic life over motherhood, placed her 'unnaturally' in a cerebral domain, where she had to face punitive consequences.

David Lewis 'Memoir' is claimed to be based on his intimate friendship with Lanyon, Wells, Nicholson and Hepworth, without any intellectual reference to the main person who introduced him to this circle, his spouse Wilhelmina. Despite his arrival at Bosporthennis only in 1947 that is after the departure of Adrian Stokes, Margaret Mellis and Naum and Miriam Gabo they too feature extensively in his 'subjective' narration. Obviously, Lewis' omission of detailed references to his life with Barns-Graham might have been due to an uneasy attempt to negotiate between a subjective and too intimate an account of personal life. But beyond this, Lewis' authorial voice oscillates between two perspectives, each of a different genre: one, personal/anecdotal, the other that of an art critic and historian, pertaining to factual objectivity, especially when he attempts to evaluate well-known artists.

Barns-Graham features in Lewis's 'Memoir' only in three short and dispersed sections—rendering the narration both brief and discontinuous, which entail: their first encounter, the details of their wedding in Scotland, with Lanyon was best man, and just one paragraph discussion her art.<sup>191</sup> He recalled his surprise when he first met the artist 'Willie'<sup>192</sup> in 1948:

At the time she was painting a series of street scenes of houses with steps and balustrades, and she was known as W. Balustrade Graham...I was surprised to find that 'Balustrade' was not a man but a woman, and a beautiful woman at that..."<sup>193</sup>

Inadvertently, he wrote a double insult both of her professional and personal reputation, at once: using a pejorative rhyming word for her surname and dismissing her artistic practice.<sup>194</sup> By this identification he undermines her recognition as an artist and positions her instead as only an object of pleasure for the male gaze. This objectification, is reinforced by the three accompanying photographs - one on Porthmeor beach with David (fig 31), the second Wilhelmina facing the photographer in her Porthmeor studio the third is in her studio facing David Lewis (fig 32), very different images to those of, say, Gabo absorbed in his work.<sup>195</sup> Lewis evaluates women, artists or otherwise, according to their desirability, as objects to be looked at. Barns-Graham, like Hepworth, is referred to in terms of feminine appearance<sup>196</sup> rather than as a *producer* of images. He similarly recalls "a sunbronzed goddess of a waitress called Mary".<sup>197</sup> Thus, Barns-Graham is positioned in between Hepworth, who has also been discussed for her artistic merit, and the other extreme of 'Mary' whose sole entity was reduced to her appearance. In discussing Barns-Graham Lewis imposed a masculine gaze at her femininity which in a catalogue article, ought to be directed at her art.

<sup>191</sup> *St Ives* (1985), Lewis did not mention Barns-Graham either in section VI, where the Carbis Bay group are discussed, or in section VII as part of the younger generation. Their meeting appears in section VII, p 25, their marriage in section X, p 29; on p 31 Lewis discusses her art.

<sup>192</sup> As the artist is universally known.

<sup>193</sup> *St Ives* (1985) p 25.

<sup>194</sup> According to Wilhelmina the topic had been a bone of contention between them and therefore, he was fully aware at the time of interviewing her and later writing it that she would take offence. That was one of the reasons that she had put an embargo on the interview tape and transcription at the Tate Archive.

<sup>195</sup> *St Ives* (1985) pp 24-25.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p 18.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p 31.



Lewis's bias stresses the men artists, and is reductive and pejorative about her art except for conceding to the value of her *Glacier Series* paintings of the 1950s. His view limited any in-depth consideration of the work of Barns-Graham. As opposed to his denigration of her 'Balustrade' series (see fig 9 where they are on the easel in the background), these works need to be considered as a comment relating to the economic and societal reality of wartime St Ives. In these Barns-Graham inscribes her visual and emotional awareness of the transformations of the townscape caused by the war, which forced the tearing down of iron balustrades because of material shortage.

Other indirect references to the impact of the war on St Ives are is a recurrent theme in Barns-Graham's paintings (see chapter 5 for detailed discussion). Lewis wrote during the 1980s in high modernist language, which owes much to Clement Greenberg's formulation of modernism,<sup>198</sup> of how "she freed herself from literal figuration, and began a series of abstract compositions."<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, in 1985 Lewis repeated the acclaim for Barns-Graham's Swiss *Glaciers Series* of 1948-52 and reduced her total *oeuvre* to this one example. All her subsequent paintings were absent her lifelong work has been condensed, arrested, as if frozen to one moment of acclaim. In addition his reading of the series' meaning as a signifier of St Ives neatly accommodates and locates the paintings within both his own biography and the aspirations of the exhibition while eradicates from the narrative Barns-Graham as an acting agent.

Ironically, the town of St Ives was discussed as the principal referent for Barns-Graham's art even when she was painting images of Grindelwald, Switzerland! Here, an irreconcilable

<sup>198</sup> For a critique and bibliography of Greenberg see Donald B. Kuspit (1979) *Clement Greenberg, Art Critic*, Londn, The University of Wisconsin Press.

<sup>199</sup> St Ives (1985) p 31.

tension emerges between the cosmopolitan aspiration of the catalogue and its nationalism, which are mapped over a gendered differentiation and consistently operate in a detrimental fashion for women artists. This evaluative asymmetry is expressed most clearly in the negative reading of the two *St Ives Island sheds* paintings, which are forever claimed to be influenced by Alfred Wallis,<sup>200</sup> or in contrast to the much-mythologized Terry Frost's *Walk Along the Quay*, 1950<sup>201</sup> the Barns-Graham's figurative *Balustrades Series* of about 1944-46 is only mentioned in terms of personal ridicule. Even more surprising is the omission of her paintings of St Ives, as she alone, of all other 'St Ives' has produced a body of art that considered the effects of war and its aftermath on St Ives. My intervention to the story of 'St Ives' aims at redressing these issues in my chapter about Barns-Graham in representing her as an active agent, whose body of work relates both to societal observation as much as to expressing her subjectivity.

Women's marginalisation has also been mapped in an independent hierarchy, outside of and parallel to the artistic hierarchies of their male colleagues. It is in this rhetoric shift the asymmetry of valorisation persists. It is manifested in various fashions, from a total expunging as that of Winifred Nicholson, Miriam Israel and Marlow Moss, to a high degree of relatively pejorative terms as in the cases of Mary Jewels, or in a reductive gendered fashion as in the cases of Mellis and Barns-Graham. In addition to the inter-gender asymmetry there is also the intra-gender hierarchy; that operates differently within each gender. Barbara Hepworth within 'St Ives', who despite all the acclaim she seems never to have musetred was, all the same, never bestowed with an equal evaluation, to that of her

<sup>200</sup> The paraphrased discussion that D. Brown had with W. Barns-Graham on 3.11.84 in which she stated the impact mainly of Gabo and also of Wallis, is always reported out of context and proportion. The work is not interpreted in the context of her creativity but as supporting the indexical figure of the 'spirit of primitivism', Alfred Wallis. *St Ives* (1985) p 162.

<sup>201</sup> D. Lewis in *St Ives* (1985) p 30, gives a misleading chronological impression of Terry Frost being the main artist and that J. Wells and W. Barns-Graham paintings also explored similar themes to his. In effect when Frost arrived in 1946 he had no tuition of art whatsoever. During 1947-50 he studied in Camberwell School of Art, the period in which Wilhelmina's art moved from its formative phase to be of her own voice and

male colleagues have received.<sup>202</sup> But for other women artists creative either within SISA, Carbis Bay or PSAC, the presence of a successful, recognized woman artist, acts not only as tokenism, but also as having filled the 'available quota' for women artists, a restriction that doesn't operate in the possible numbers of male artists to be included in 'St Ives'. The various levels of selection and/or exclusion of modernist women artists was thus not informed by a consideration of their artistic merit, as practitioners - since little critical attention was given to their works - but by the symbolic violence of a masculinist genealogy and domination.<sup>203</sup>

Contrary to modernist claim of alignment with the cosmopolitan artistic genealogies, and its emphasis on the master-disciple formula that then evolves to the disciple's attainment of independent artistic expression, this formula was not applied to women painters' progression. Neither Winifred Nicholson's influence on Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood, or Marlow Moss's on Mondrian were included in the catalogue.<sup>204</sup> The absence of women painters from the catalogue also indicates the cultural inability to perceive women as

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formulation. Terry Frost Painting. cat.no.99, and a photograph of him walking along the quay stress his 'symbolic ownership' of the theme, p 119, and 80.

<sup>202</sup> See K. Deepwell (1996) 'Hepworth and her Critics,' in: Thistlewood, David (ed.)(1996) *Barbara Hepworth Reconsidered*, Critical Forum Series, Vol. 3. Liverpool University Press and Tate Gallery Liverpool, pp 75-94. and P. Florence (1996) 'Barbara Hepworth: the Odd Man Out? Preliminary Thoughts about a Public Artist', in: Thistlewood, David (ed.), *Barbara Hepworth Reconsidered*. Critical Forum Series, Vol. 3. Liverpool University Press and Tate Gallery Liverpool.

<sup>203</sup> I am using Bourdieu's terms here. His definition of symbolic violence is: "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity." In Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J.D. Wacquant (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge, Polity Press in association with Oxford, Blackwells, p 167.

<sup>204</sup> Marlow Moss was a founder member of *Abstraction-Création* group in Paris and her art and statements featured in their annual *Cahier* from its first publication in 1932, on an equal footing as Gabo, Mondrian, Pevsner, Schwitters and Wadsworth. During the war years she took refuge in Newlyn, Cornwall, where she died in *Abstraction-Creation* (1932) *Cahier* no 1, pp. 14, 25, 26, 30, 33. Moss' work was also illustrated in the four following cahiers, in each with two illustration *Cahier* no.5 (1936), published after Nicholson and Hepworth became members and are not named but subsumed in the statistics of abstract artists outside France. P.3, while Moss has two illustrations in p.18. The fact that she was kept out of becoming a member of PSAC or invited to exhibit in any of the exhibitions that claimed to promote non-figurative art, indicate the threat that her seniority posed on Ben Nicholson's self-positioning. More importantly, is the fact that though she was the initiator of the compositional exploration with a double line, for which Mondrian acknowledged her influence on him, in recent solo retrospective of his work, though one of his own double lines is used as a cover illustration, but on pp. 353-359 Bois discusses the 'double line' introduction into and involvement in his art, with no mention of Marlow Moss. The early examples of sketches he brings to support an argument that Mondrian considered the double line as early as 1928 are very dubious, especially at the face of Mondrian's own recognition of the debt he owed to Moss. Bois, Yve-Alain (1994) 'The Iconoclast' in *Piet Mondrian* Catalogue. Leonardo Arte.

mature independent creative agents. Their status, in the Artwriting and in public institutional appraisals remains forever 'chaperoned', that is, their art is never allowed to stand on its own, expressing their subjectivity, but is forever tied into a web of paternal reliance, responsibility, indebtedness. Either in terms of decision making for them or in terms of offering a model for imitation, any of the women artists' achievements are transformed to yet another sign of a male's excellence from whose influence and 'chaperoned reputation' they seem never to be able to have grown out.

Reading the recorded and transcribed interviews of 1981 not for their information initially but for the methods used makes clear the degree to which women voices were denied their views. It ranges from the kind of questions they were asked; to the interruptions if and when they attempted to discuss their own art; and finally, in the biased selection of the material finally brought to publication. Only the information that reaffirmed the interviewers/authors' preconceptions made its way to the text. Other versions, insights and amendments were ignored, as a matter of fact are still ignored by the publications. The interviews with women painters and wives are extensive, but in the catalogue's main text their presence is extremely minimal, as it has been in the exhibition galleries. By contrast, women seem to disappear amidst their verifying evidence.<sup>205</sup> Their presence in the footnotes and chronologies though relatively more frequent, where their letters, diaries and interviews, have all footnoted, indicates a textual-spatial division, or rather, the relegation of their subjectivity and art to the margins and to the footnotes. It is this trend that my thesis aims to reverse in offering an alternative reading of their art, by reinstating the women painters' subjectivity on a par with their male colleagues.

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<sup>205</sup> As a foreigner to British culture I cannot help but thinking about the ditty that children should be seen but not heard as a parallel to the disappearance of the women's subjecthood. They seem to be working and talking about it but it remains unheard.

Contrary to the claimed cosmopolitan lineage of modernism, a model following Barr's famous marking of lines of influences, which marks intellectual and expressive lineages, the English modernism established as 'St Ives' operates strongly on a familial lineage. To varying degrees, men occupying powerful organisational or otherwise, positions (i.e. with access to making authoritarian, decisions and/or public statements) promote artists that align themselves within a dynastic genealogy. Thus even biological essentialism operates asymmetrically; it reduces women to the short-term functions of procreation; but it enables powerful men to establish and claim the long-term dynastic cultural projection. Paradoxically, this dynastic impetus seems to be a tacit contributor in the a-symmetrical and gendered historicising of the so-called 'St Ives Modernism'. A high-ranking man, in control of symbolic capital and with either access to, or the power of, decision-making proves to be an essential asset and possibly determinant of women artists long term positioning. This has certainly been the case, albeit in relative terms, for Berthe Morisot, in the past history, and for Barbara Hepworth within 'St Ives'. Interestingly enough it seems also to be at this moment, while writing the chapter, the case of Margaret Mellis reputation. Despite years of active efforts invested in organising exhibitions in attempts of promoting her own and her late husband's, Patrick Davison public visibility, it is only recently, when due to her increased vulnerability at the age of 88 that her son, Telfer Stokes took on himself to promote her art<sup>206</sup> that she had a retrospective accompanied by a catalogue with critical considered critical views.<sup>207</sup> The accompanying catalogue is the first one to contain in addition to the general biographical data: a foreword by Damien Hirst 'Where Land meets the Sea'<sup>208</sup> and David Batchelor's 'The Envelope Paintings'.<sup>209</sup> Thus, the role of the

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<sup>206</sup> In conversation with Telfer Stokes on 29.7.02 during the Adrian Stokes Conference in Brumwell, University of Bristol.

<sup>207</sup> There were two consecutive exhibitions - in London's Austin/Desmond gallery, and Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall during October-November 2001.

<sup>208</sup> *Margaret Mellis* (2001) Exhibition Catalogue. Austin/Desmond Fine Art and Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall, pp 3-5.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 37-39.

surviving influential, (or should one write 'significant'?) male who will take on the role of positioning and promoting the art of women artists is crucial.

However the recent mushrooming of artistic dynasties, such as that of the Nicholsons, Leaches, Herons, Frosts, Lanyons, Hiltons, Feilers, and others besides, puts into question the autonomy arguments of modernism on one hand and at the same time also operates on a denial for women's subjectivity outside the realms of familial, dynastic framework. To what extent is it an issue of pure aesthetic evaluation or one of upholding the masculine dynastic reputation remains a mute question. Whichever way, it seems that, even the inclusions of Winfred Nicholson, M. Mellis and Barns-Graham in the system of recognition which constructs modernism through an artistic and masculine centred dynasty<sup>210</sup> even then –alas- acts as a relative closure on the evaluation of their life and work. The categories of implied importance identified in the catalogue: major individuals, abstraction, primitivism, place and displacement, are all used rhetorically in the construction of 'St Ives' by way of inaccurate omission and marginalisation of: society, crafts, figuration, surrealism and gender, from the institutional, authoritative system of conferring aesthetic value. But the most pernicious distortion in the 1985 exhibition was that it reflected and established the masculinist, naturalised paradigm that denies subjectivity and agency to the women painters.

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<sup>210</sup> The family trees of the Nicholsons, incl. A. Bowness, and that of Patrick Heron and his daughters are displayed prominently in Hepworth's Museum, St Ives.

## Chapter 3

**Margaret Mellis – The exquisite arrangement of Space<sup>1</sup>****Introduction**

In this chapter I am looking at Margaret Mellis (Appendix 17) from two perspectives: first, how she operated within the circle that eventually became known as St Ives School, and her reductive appraisal within the group. Generally the first section considers her place within the English artworld structure and in the second part I consider her artwork, namely reading her work as a speaking subject, whose voice has been marginalized within the Symbolic Capital that 'St Ives' other artists have acquired since 1985.

Of the three women artists that I argue ought to be given greater prominence within 'St Ives' – Winifred Nicholson, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham and Margaret Mellis – the latter has received the least institutional exposure. While her paintings make occasional appearance in group exhibitions, as the Tate Gallery's 1985 (two works), and at the inaugural exhibition of the Tate St Ives, 1993 (one canvas), the only retrospective exhibition dedicated to her in a civic, non-commercial gallery was in the City Art Centre, Edinburgh, June-July 1997, when she was well into her eighties (Appendix 18).<sup>2</sup> The exhibition, a comprehensive, two floors display, was jointly curated by Kapil Jariwala and Mellis and accompanied by the most comprehensive catalogue about her work so far with 6 pages of introduction by Mel Gooding and 19 colour illustrations. Compared to the vast number of exhibits the catalogue is but a modest affair (for her paintings at the Tate Collection see Appendix 19). The guiding principles of this chapter are revisiting the defining categories of 'St Ives' as defined by the canon by way of qualifying the over-emphasised claims as well as inserting some of the absences and consider the following issues: the gap between reductionism in the representation of Mellis's (and other women artists) and the richness of her output; the tacit

<sup>1</sup> From Adrian Stokes *Inside Out* p 162.

<sup>2</sup> *Margaret Mellis: A Retrospective* (June-July 1997) City Art Centre, Edinburgh and Kapil Jariwala Gallery, London (October- November 1997).

but ubiquitous regionalism contained within British (in effect English) modernism; the terms in which Mellis's life-long creativity relates to her wartime stay and experience in Little Park Owles, Carbis Bay.

Mellis's 'presence' in the 1985 catalogue was limited to two abstract works: *Collage with Red Triangle*, 1940<sup>3</sup> and *Construction with Wood*, 1940.<sup>4</sup> Both works were also exhibited in the 1977 exhibition *Cornwall 1945-55*. She is however listed 18 times in the index of the catalogue. Most of these references are of her as a spouse to Adrian Stokes, or as an eyewitness informant of those years, rather than as an artist. The two illustrative photographs in the 'Biographic Notes' section stress this image even further. She is pictured there either as a mother or a companion.<sup>5</sup> Despite having her work in its collection, the Tate Gallery has never staged a one-person exhibition of hers.<sup>6</sup> Like Winifred Nicholson, Mellis too was represented in *St Ives* and the official museal appraisal in a reductive mode, but each artist in a different artistic practice. Mellis work was represented in *St Ives* only with her abstract collages of the early 1940s, her paintings prior and after that was ignored. Thus, while both women painters were positioned in a reductive manner, each stood for a different kind of practice. Winifred Nicholson was positioned (generally, that is, since she does not feature in the catalogue as an artist) as only a figurative painter mainly of flowers

<sup>3</sup> *St Ives* (1985) cat. No. 60, fig. 1, pp 167-168.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, cat. No. 61, fig 2, p 168.

<sup>5</sup> Both photographs by Annelie Bunyard of Bunyard-Adler Studio, 1942 pp 131,142. Only Terry Frost is portrayed in a paternal role but walking ahead in a fatherly manner p 119, and Joe Tilson seen on the beach with his wife and son and Peter Blake p 143 and Alan Lowndes p 130. Sandra Blow is photographed in her studio 118; W. Barns-Graham is photographed in her studio but having a discussion with her husband David Lewis p 115; Hepworth is the only woman seen as working on a sculpture p.124. The photographs accompanying the Biographical Notes section are mostly either traditional portraits, bust to full-length, or in studio or against their work (Trevor Bell p 116, Feiler p. 119, Fuller p. 120, Gabo p. 121, D. Haughton p 122, Adrian Heath p 123, R. Hilton p. 127, P. Lanyon and B. Law p. 128, Roger Leigh p 129, John Milne p 132, Denis Mitchell p 133, Guido Morris p 134, Dicon and Robin Nance p 134, Adrian Ryan and William Scott p 140, Borlase Smart p 141, Brian Wall p. 144 ) or in landscape environment – 8 in total: Sven Berlin against his tower, home/studio; Ben Nicholson – against the view of St Ives harbour, Patrick Heron- sitting against rocks of the moor, Christopher Wood, Alice Moore and Kate Nicholson. Adrian Stokes , with Margaret and Telfer are photographed in their garden with Little Park Owles at the background, A. Wallis leaning against his home's doorway. Ten photographs are traditional, focusing on facial features. Activities such as drumming are an exception in Tunnard photograph p. 143.

<sup>6</sup> Tate Gallery collection nos. T04124, T01267, T04929, T0 4930.



while ignoring her abstract work, Mellis was represented in the catalogue only by her the abstract work. This curious inversed emphasis cannot be explained in gendered asymmetry but in terms of positioning that relates to the claimed status of Ben Nicholson, namely age and perceived seniority. Winifred, who was the same generation and whose paintings were more advanced in modernist terms than Ben's was appropriated by her husband to a degree that his paintings of the late 1920s are easily mistaken for hers (Appendix 2). The image is of unintended poignancy in its corrective erasure of the initial attribution of the drawing to Winifred. Unlike the erasure of Wilhelmina Barns-Graham's name from Lanyon's reconstructed history (Appendix 3), here the mistake points to the canon's error in assuming figurative interiors with still-life in front of a window to be the categorical domain of Winifred. The drawing by Ben reveals how much his art is indebted to his first wife and how much of this debt has been written out from the canon. Ben regularly and extensively acknowledged the debt he owed her in his numerous letters to their mutual friends of the art world of the time.<sup>7</sup> After their separation, when Ben's self-positioning became aggressively of a geometrical abstractionist he stressed Winifred's figurative paintings as opposed to his abstracts, concealing in the process her contribution to his abstract formulation.<sup>8</sup> Ignoring Winifred's equal standing was essential for Ben's claim for greater advanced practice. \* The opposite is true about Margaret's abstractions. For insisting that Margaret, the young bride of Adrian Stokes, took up making abstract collage becomes indexical to Ben's leadership and supports his image of not only of a progressive artist but also as a head of an avant-garde. Thus, though both artists were subjected to reductive evaluation their temporal context is crucial to the kind of reduction of their practice. What both cases share is that in different ways both are deprived of any recognition of their independent creativity. The reductive positioning of Mellis supports the significance attributed to abstraction, and also

<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that during the 1920s he wrote on numerous occasion that she was one of the main influences on his art, on a par with Picasso's. Kettle's Yard Archive Ben Nicholson File 1, no 2, 1927.

<sup>8</sup> The argument of her abstract work and involvement in Paris is long and detailed, but here I will only state the facts that in Paris Winifred studied the language of abstraction with Domela, and that Ben's first geometrical abstracts were made when he came to visit her and their Children in Paris.

has its rationale in looking at the artistic change that she has undergone while living in close proximity to Barbara, Ben and Gabo.

But the focus on her work comes a long way down the scale of interests after the main 'use' of Mellis in the catalogue, which is really an affirmation and illustration of the transformative and influential power of the 'major artists'.<sup>9</sup> In effect, her art as well as that of W. Barns-Graham is presented as example of young women artists, followers of Ben and Gabo.<sup>10</sup> Like Winifred Nicholson, Mellis too has mostly been restricted to the spaces of footnotes and where there is attention to her art her creativity is articulated in a chaperoned context. Mellis's position is fixed as an eternal disciple, Winifred's as a matron, a connotative reduction that mirrors the western categorising of women into three categories: the virginal, desirable nubile woman, the maternal woman, and the old hag.<sup>11</sup> Their relative ages to that of Ben have determined the way their work has been reduced and fixed.

In what follows I first will locate the community and specificity of the 'Carbis Bay Group,' as distinct from St Ives, in order to highlight how it impacted on Margaret Mellis, as distinct from how she has been positioned within it. Following Bourdieu's assertion that positioning is obtained not only by artistic output but by the strategic use of the avant-garde network, my analysis aims to outline the wartime conditions and character of the Carbis Bay Phase/Group and their internal and external dynamics of creativity and strategic support

<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the catalogue is an accurate reflection of the interviews and taped transcriptions. All the questions she was being asked were about the 'major figures' and whenever she attempted to talk about her own work or offer an alternative perspective to the preconceived narrative she was interrupted by the interviewers. The interviewers did not seek new perspectives but new anecdotes to verify their already established narrative.

<sup>10</sup> She and Barns-Graham are thus described in the introduction to the section on the war years p. 162.

<sup>11</sup> This essentialising of women's age sets must have been even further stressed with the loaded psychoanalytical gendering in Adrian Stokes's writing, especially in his emphasis on the matter as maternal, be it stone or landscape. For the first see Alex Potts (1996) in David Thistlewood (ed) *Barbara Hepworth Reconsidered*, Critical Forum Series, Vol. 3, Liverpool University Press and Tate Gallery Liverpool. For the second, see for example Adrian Stokes's assertion in *Inside Out* that "Hyde Park is especially a destroyed and contaminated mother", p.158. in (1978) *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, vol. II, Thames and Hudson.

and/or rivalries. This aims firstly to redress the mainstream's lack of attention to its specificity of what I argue to be a distinctive phase.

From whichever way one considers the Carbis Bay wartime configuration, either as a postscript to London's Mall Studio's *Circle* or as a prelude to 'St Ives' construction, its unchanging characteristic is that during the war years it has been an artistic battlefield for individual's claim for top position in an avant-garde hierarchy. I will therefore consider what were the artistic and personal aspects of the Carbis Bay phase that have become crucial in the lifelong artistic output of Mellis, as well as for her positioning. This section is not only an intervention but also a brief thematised chronology of her art, for of all the three protagonists of my study her art is the least written about. My aim is not to claim that Carbis Bay left her without its artistic impact, but to highlight how it has been absorbed into her own subjectivity. In essence I want to portray her as an agent of her art in contrast to the 'Chaperoned evaluation' into which she has been fixed.

### **Carbis Bay**

Having discussed the national and local cultural connotations contained within the notions of Carbis Bay, in this section I am looking at the particular meaning of the place for the group that lived and worked there during the war years and that defined itself for that duration as 'Constructivists'. The focus is both on the group/phase as a unified entity, which is not recognized as such in the dominant literature, and as a setting within which Margaret Mellis lived and worked.

The exclusive trend of the 1985 catalogue inevitably meant expunging, and one of its fatalities has been the Carbis Bay phase. Unlike the detailed attention regularly directed at both the 'The Gentle Nest of artists' period in Hampstead, during the mid 1930s, and to the St Ives post-war years, precious little attention has been directed at the dynamics of the war-years, either in terms of two localities or of two neighbouring communities of artists. Even

when Carbis Bay and St Ives are being identified as separate places, still their distinctive nature remains blurred. For instance, a post-war guidebook presents a rough outline for visitors to the region to give them an idea of what to expect:

This charming bay is but a part of the great inlet to which St Ives has given its name. Only a mile and a quarter separate it from the town....At one time Carbis Bay was known only as a picnicking haunt, but of late years it has attracted a considerable number of residents and visitors, so that quite a little town has sprung up on top of the cliffs.<sup>12</sup>

It connects and separates the two at one and the same time. This kind of blurring, exposes lack of sensibility for their individual atmosphere and meanings. It stands in stark contrast to the finely-tuned distinctions made, say about Cheyne Walk, Hampstead or Bloomsbury, in London, or indeed the worldliness displayed in the connoisseurship of the configuration and constituencies of both Montmartre and Montparnasse of Paris.<sup>13</sup> St Ives and Carbis Bay are subjected to a different set of worldly connotations. Being a favoured destination for holidaying, for escapism, they became one and the same in the collective imagination of urban, middle-class visitors. Adrian Stokes expressed his rejection of the capital city in favour of the country, determined by a sense of fatigue and disillusion with the modernity that is city life:

Modern cities fight the mystery of the seasons and themselves receive wounds. Here in England is a nameless care in moderate climate. Electric bulb! ... Nothing is more sudden than the switched-on light. One moment darkness, the next the radiant stare of a glass eye, brilliant, fixed, without incandescence. The dome of the bank fills with holiness at dawn. Space and measurement are diluted by oil and candle-light: in the flicker of a flame a door rears the head of portal. Night rushes on still faster as she enters the mouths and caverns that quiver on the wall. But in a cage of wire the electric bulb does not wink. At the mouth of a gusty tunnel it illuminates a white patch around which dust is blowing.... But what is this fibrous, non-pulsating electric light in the mouth of a gusty tunnel? Like a crane that cleaves the night air, we are waiting. We cannot yet humanize (such is the process of all image, of all correspondence between inner and outer) the electric light.<sup>14</sup>

Carbis Bay and St Ives as a combined entity offered a welcome escape from the dehumanising effects of the city. St Ives offered the quaint primordial simplicity that was there so reassuringly to be viewed, Carbis Bay, the nearby comfortable locality to lodge in

<sup>12</sup> Ward Lock & Co. guidebook (1946) *St Ives Carbis Bay and Western Cornwall*, 14<sup>th</sup> edition, p.9.

<sup>13</sup> For an analysis of the identities, distinct and interrelated of Bloomsbury: Raymond Williams (1980) 'The Bloomsbury Fraction' in *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays*, London, Verso. For Montparnasse and Montmartre, see Cottington (1998b) pp 47-48.

<sup>14</sup> Adrian Stokes (1978 (1947)) *Inside Out*, Thames and Hudson p. 167 in *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, vol. II, Thames and Hudson.

while taking in the scenes. What became the unifying quality of Carbis Bay and St Ives in the imagination of Adrian Stokes, and possibly also the others, was its contrast to the urban life from which these peripheries offered an escape. In mapping unto the South-West region an exotic quality, that is essentially their non-differentiating fantasy, the two merge into one in the 'outsiders' way of thinking, not as differentiating explicitly St Ives and Carbis Bay, but London and Penwith.

But different historical spans and connotations are attached to each of the locations and the trend of the outsiders' naming shorthand, that imposed its perception, is at variance with the 'local knowledge'.<sup>15</sup> Against this generalised unification the natives of St Ives were tuned not only to distinctions between St Ives and Carbis Bay but even to parts of St Ives itself. While he interviewed Priaulx Rainier David Lewis recounted how in the 1950s a local woman from 'Downalong', St Ives, has told him that she had never left the harbour part of St Ives.<sup>16</sup>

Contrary to the highly romanticized connotations ascribed to St Ives and Carbis Bay's history by outsiders their history has been predicated and punctuated by modernity accompanied by economic and employment shifts of which the expansion of railways and rise of tourism are the most obvious manifestations (figs. 20, 68). This aspect is evident in different genre of literature from that of modernism, namely, the proliferation of guide books of which *The Blue Book Guide to Cornwall* with a special 'Complete Guide to the English Riviera', 1937-38, divides St Ives itself to "up-a-long, modern and fresh and up-to-date; the other, down-along, and is called 'The Digey,' and is nothing if not old and quaint

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<sup>15</sup> I am using here Clifford Geertz's concept of 'Local Knowledge' as an anthropological source of perception: he argued that colonising notions of traditional anthropology did not take into account its classification of societies, Islamic in his study. I am using it in terms of internal colonising by the centre of the periphery, by the Londoners and beyond, of Penwith. Clifford Geertz (1983) *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology*, New York, Basic Books.

<sup>16</sup> On reading this passage of the thesis, (3.11.02) W. Barns-Graham was taken aback since, she claimed that the event and statement were made to her and it became one of her much-repeated anecdotes that seem to have been appropriated by her ex-husband as if it happened to him. The appropriation, in her view, is indicative of many other things that she claims ownership over but have been told and published as his either making or experience.

and grey with venerable age as Father Time himself.”<sup>17</sup> By contrast, Carbis Bay is described as “one of the newest...and most promising of the rising pleasure resorts in West Cornwall.”<sup>18</sup> What was/is at work is the dual, if uneven, impact of an internal (in terms of British regional) colonising process, magnified by the impact of ‘urban myths’ of English modernism that unifies rural regions and is insensitive in recognizing rural distinctions, not only when they are adjacent but also those of geographical extreme distances. Such an essentialising of localities that are actually geographically located at the extreme ends of north and south of the British Isles is manifested and fictionalised in Virginia Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse*. Convincingly she fictionalised her memories as if they happened in Scotland, but factually she described St Ives, in a manner that both transposes and collapses two localities into one generic place. In effect, though it might have been done for reasons of propriety and privacy, it amounts to generalised reduction of St Ives to any picturesque holiday destination.

Despite their proximity, Carbis Bay differs from St Ives in its topographical, environmental qualities, geology, fauna and kind of habitations – as well as in its artistic social network. The difference between the small vernacular fishermen terraces of St Ives and the spacious detached houses surrounded by gardens with views, speak of an a-priori class distinction of the inhabitants of each of the places. Other than impoverished artists in search of cheap studios and living spaces, visitors to the region were not inclined to ‘rough-it’ in St Ives’s downalong. By contrast to the old St Ives’s, Carbis Bay is a by-product of Victorian industrial engineering, and clearly signals input of new economic opulence and available comfort of which guidebook reassures the visitors:

Old St Ives, in fact, is now enclosed by considerable and very attractive residential areas, with ample modern hotel and other accommodation for visitors and those who expect to find merely the picturesque old fishing town will be surprised at the extent to which St Ives has grown in recent years.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *The Cornwall Blue Book* (1937-38) 10<sup>th</sup> ed., Newquay, H. Liddicoat, p 258.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p 261.

<sup>19</sup> Ward Lock & Co. (1946) p2.

The heady mixture of Old St Ives with the modern, comforts in Carbis Bay provide a unique opportunity for cultural voyeurism, of old times hardship (declining mining and fishing industries, as well as the then current myth of impoverished bohemian artists) combined with bohemian escape from the mores of middle class regulated life.

In topographical terms too Carbis Bay is an inversion to St Ives. The latter is a rocky, thin causeway, jutting ruggedly northwards into the Atlantic Ocean, the former gently closes into itself in a soft long sandy curve all the way to the Hayle estuary and dunes. Carbis Bay's large Victorian detached houses are set high above the fir treetops and their view commands the whole sweep of the long, sandy beach. St Ives small vernacular cottage terraces are huddled in tight proximity, in narrow cobbled lanes:

Sometimes of an evening in a narrow marine street a concentrated salt air blows over a wall; it is as if the very cobbles, not the waves were hissing. These strong airs are warm, a lighted doorway is firm and open. Both air and noise blow round incessantly, are never stale. Indeed there is a calm and a freshness inter-allied, a temperance of wild air that gives some meaning to the word 'eternal'; an embrace of ferment as sleep should be.<sup>20</sup>

The way in which Adrian visited the streets of St Ives expresses an embodied experience which he described as timeless. Its feel is totally different from that of the detached aloof domineering sense of Carbis Bay heights. A similar note of exoticizing poverty is also expressed in Margaret's comment: "We thought it was marvellous ...all those old mines are, or mine shafts and old mines fascinating part of the country."<sup>21</sup> Thus both the natural topographical spaciousness and the built environments of either place speak of different moods, class and histories. If classification needs to be made, then the rationale offered in the catalogue for periodization of 'a St Ives' in term of generations surely deserves to be qualified further in terms of networks of the artistic communities and of localities.

<sup>20</sup> Stokes (1978 (1947) p 160.

<sup>21</sup> Mellis in interview transcript, TAV 272 AB p 9.

Broadly speaking, modernity and the influx of tourism into Cornwall since the 1904 railways-promotion campaign of the Cornish Riviera have changed the patterns of income and the social fabric, especially with the decline of both the mining and the fishing industries. In this long-term sense, the arrival of evacuees into Carbis Bay, during the war years, fits generally into a long tradition of the place accommodating an escape from the city for the more affluent sections of society, and more specifically from the turmoil that Europe was subjected to during the war. While St Ives had been previously the holiday destination of both Ben Nicholson and Adrian Stokes, on this occasion none of the evacuees made the region their home out of free choice. After their Italian honeymoon Margaret and Adrian searched for a time for a house in Suffolk and Norfolk and only after their efforts had come up with nothing, did they go to St Ives, with only a vague idea that it might be an alternative location.<sup>22</sup> They came down to St Ives in May 1939 because of the pending war, "after Munich Adrian believed London would be blown up."<sup>23</sup> Little Park Owles was bought from the original owner, Mrs Lewis Thomas, who had commissioned it from Kennedy the architect, and they retained in employment the original gardener, Mr Farrel.<sup>24</sup> Thus the atmosphere around Little Park Owles contained the ambivalence of the holiday atmosphere of the surroundings with the comforts of a modern architect-designed building, a far cry from the vernacular style of St Ives terraces, and at one and the same time the harshness and anxieties that the war years brought with them.

On a professional level from the outset the Carbis Bay artists saw themselves as advanced in relation to the prevailing art practice of St Ives society artists, claiming for themselves the title of 'the moderns' or 'the modern movement', as well as claiming to be abstract artists and 'constructivists', as distinct from and more advanced than the academicians of SISA.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> I owe this distinction between the two groups of artistic communities to W. Barns-Graham.



The core individuals of the Carbis Bay 'moderns' - Naum Gabo, Barbara Hepworth, Miriam Israel, Margaret Mellis, Ben Nicholson, and Adrian Stokes --kept themselves aloof and separate from the 'artists colony'.<sup>26</sup> The distinction between the two groups was one of self-formation along stylistic, generic and social lines as well as the different patterns of links that each group maintained with London. Members of SISA aligned themselves with the Academy, while the associations in Carbis Bay had maintained and developed further their personal contacts with a network of patrons, writers, art critics, patrons/collectors and scientists (H.S. Ede, H. Read, Summerson, Bamel, M. Margeret, Ramsden).

The two groups also differed in their reaction to and involvement with the war. Reading their correspondence and looking at their art, it is surprising how little, amongst the Carbis Bay group, the war features in their life other than as an irritating interruption to their careers.<sup>27</sup> For personal ethnic reasons, the two exceptions were Naum and Adrian, the first a atheist Jew<sup>28</sup> and the latter a closet Jew, whose descent from the Spharadi Montefiore's was kept unmentioned. Both reacted to the war with a level of externalised fear which made it appear as if their reaction was stronger than that of the others (likewise did Mondrian).<sup>29</sup> Adrian Stokes on his part famously left London in a most emphatic manner very early, in May of 1939, in anticipation of a looming war. In *Inside Out*, 1947 he contrasts the 'good mother' he has found in Rapallo and how it lead him to his aesthetic theory with:

<sup>26</sup> Barns-Graham recalls being ridiculed by the Carbis Bay circle for living and working in St Ives. She was asked: what did she hope to find amongst those academicians? Information during interviews.

<sup>27</sup> For myself it is incredible to see the photographs of sunbathing, croquet games and walks along lanes, all taken at the time that horrific destruction and extermination was taking place in Europe, and read the group's complaints about the hardship they had to suffer. See figs.34,35.

<sup>28</sup> Who claimed that the war forced him to become a Jew, see Hammer and Lodder, (2000) pp 11-17, 284.

<sup>29</sup> The racial configuration of 'St Ives' is another absent topic from the mainstream literature. Sven Berlin, Stokes, David Lewis, Naum Gabo were Jews, with varied degrees of self-awareness. Gabo, who worried about the fate of his brothers about whose fate he had no news, is frequently referred to as paranoiac. For his state of mind at the time see Miriam Gabo interview TAV270 AB, as well as Hammer and Lodder p 284. The same accusation of being paranoiac is directed at Gabo's irate reaction to hearing about Nicholson and Hepworth's manipulation of their exhibition priorities after the war. While in 1937 he only protested mildly at Nicholson's strategic manipulation of the order of the printed names of the editors of *Circle*, with Nicholson being before Gabo, against their alphabetical order.

Fire, slaughter, sunlight, rain: the major conflict went on; in London especially. Was there 'objective' justification for the hopelessness I felt in urban life, in suburban life, in polite or semi-polite country life; justification, I mean, warranted to every civilized person who, for one reason or another was not equipped with adequate defences? <sup>30</sup>

He poignantly relates the horrors of war to his inner doubt and sense of hopelessness in his beautiful refuge of Carbis Bay's 'polite or semi-polite country life' (figs 33, 34). On a further more imaginary sombre note he writes about the conditional/personally symbolical way that nature is being perceived:

If we were to be shot or hanged within the hour, how fine and untroubled the landscape. We should feel that the ruthlessness within was already dead; or at least expiation was about to be made. And so, the exterior world would lean for us lovingly: we would feel of Nature only the wide embrace. Hitler, the slums and shipwreck would be dead in us: they would no longer qualify the landscape. How finely, how unattainably *out there* the world would look. Unattainably? We shall attain the state out there, the state of complete object, the very brother to stone, all too soon, all too completely....<sup>31</sup>

There is a morbid imagining of being already dead. In a more specific passage about "Here in Cornwall" Stokes expresses his sense of "otherness", a sense of alienation from the daily flow of life for, "I sometime have the feeling that what I see out of my eyes is a projection of pictures in my head as if I were a cinema reel and the outside world a screen on which the film is projected."<sup>32</sup> However strongly and personally these feelings are being expressed it would be reasonable to assume that they express also the feelings of the other members of the group at Carbis Bay.

By contrast to the contemplative aestheticising expressed in Stokes's writing there is a sense that in St Ives Society there was a stronger feeling of active involvement with the war. Many of the members' studios were left empty as the artists joined the forces.<sup>33</sup> Even on an intellectual level, the Carbis Bay group seems to have been of a retiring political culture

<sup>30</sup> *Inside Out* (1978) p 159.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p 160.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p 159.

<sup>33</sup> Barns-Graham was one beneficiary of this state of affairs as she was offered the use of one of the Porthmeor studios shortly after arriving in St Ives. As for the Carbis Bay men's involvement with the Home Guards, the language of heroic involvement by comparison to the sufferings and battles elsewhere seem to have more to do with attempts to regain some of the kudos that they suffered in their feminising situation and age, the anecdotes of self-sacrificial actions are by and large an attempt to regain a modicum of masculinity.

when we compare their commitments and expressions to intellectual commitment of their close friends like Herbert-Read and the activist Margaret Gardiner.<sup>34</sup> For the Carbis Bay group time was spent, understandably, in the effort of surviving, (gardening) and being creative, without ever overlooking any opportunity for strategic self-positioning.<sup>35</sup> These precarious artificial ties that held the group together also became their bone of contention within a short time of their starting to live in a claustrophobic proximity,<sup>36</sup> and brought about at the end of the war the dissolution of marriages and friendships. The marriages of Adrian and Margaret and that of Ben and Barbara broke up after the war. The Gabos and Adrian Stokes left Carbis Bay, and six months after Adrian's departure Margaret left too with her new partner and husband to be Francis Davison. Gabo's suspicion that Hepworth and Nicholson's strategically argued for and brought about a change in the planned order to exhibitions at Lefever Gallery, with Gabo's being swapped to take place only after theirs, clinched the Gabos resolution to leave Carbis Bay and England as soon as possible.<sup>37</sup>

The Carbis Bay phase had come to an end with Ben and Barbara emerging after the war as well poised to make full use of their cultivated national network, by way of fine tuning their regional activities with the emerging new art world and institutions established in the capital after the war.<sup>38</sup> The dissolution of their marriage, however, did not affect their strategic manoeuvring within the local art scene. For Barbara and Ben the new institutional culture,

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Davey (1998) 'Herbert Read and Englishness' p 279 writes: "Read took his political bearings from an anti-statist left in Britain (Morris, Carpenter and the Guild Socialists) and the traditions of Continental anarchism (Kropotkin, Proudhon and Bakunin)." Also in the same anthology see David Thistlewood 'Herbert Read's Organic Aesthetics' p 216. Gardiner claimed to have been too involved in political activism to really try and understand art. She collected art and supported artist only because she felt a loyalty and a sense of responsibility and support towards her creative friends. Interview with Margaret Gardiner August 1997.

<sup>35</sup> A note of criticism that also indicates the degree of self-gratification in Ben Nicholson's life is expressed in H.S. Ede's letter to him in possibly the spring of 1945: "Mercy I can't see all these romantic orgies you are indulging in for I couldn't afford them." TGA 8717 1.2.907.

<sup>36</sup> Terry Frost made the pertinent observation that in every artistic milieu there are rivalries, but the size and density of St Ives and the region made it seem more than elsewhere. In London, he claimed, there is a possibility to socialise outside the watchful eyes of your colleagues, not so in St Ives, interview September 1997.

<sup>37</sup> Miriam Gabo TAV 270AB.

<sup>38</sup> For a comprehensive survey of the institutional changes during the postwar years see Brandon Taylor (1999) Chapter in *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London public 1747-2000*, Manchester University Press.

especially with the foundation of the Arts Council, and the relatively buoyant demand for public sculpture, had been a welcomed opportunity for renewed energy and intensive productivity. Their separate move to St Ives and foundation of PSAC was in effect a local take-over of a society<sup>39</sup> of which they were practically in control and usefully also acted as its spokespersons to the new mandarins<sup>40</sup> in a way that they positioned themselves at the centre of the actions both in St Ives and in London's new art institutions.

### **Carbis Bay Group**

What were the societal and artistic dynamics of the Carbis Bay group and how did Mellis fit into them? Just like Winifred's crucial contribution to the formation of Ben Nicholson as 'the British Picasso', so Mellis too has been right at the centre of the heroic international phase that took place in her home at Carbis Bay. The Carbis Bay Group was a configuration initially based on friendship and professional loyalties that evolved into rivalries and professional bickering, and led to the group's disintegration. In a curious way, the fate of the marriage of Adrian and Margaret charts a parallel to that of the groups' dynamics.<sup>41</sup>

Charting the evolution of 'St Ives' in a periodizing way of thinking locates the Carbis Bay Phase as a follow-up and regrouping of the Hampstead based 'nest of gentle artists', as Herbert Read famously described them. Three different kinds of symbolic capital represented the masculine competitions between Adrian Stokes, Naum Gabo and Ben Nicholson, despite the claimed unifying social milieu of Hampstead's Mall Studios. The intensity of living in such a proximity and interdependency exposed in a more severe

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<sup>39</sup> A take over that Ben had previously expressed the wish to do, according to Mellis additional notes in TAV272 AB, and reiterated during interviews with me.

<sup>40</sup> As Brandon Taylor (1999) calls them in his *Art for the Nation*.

<sup>41</sup> Nicholson and Hepworth, unlike the Stokes, remained an effective and powerful professional unit in St Ives, (rivalries took place outside it) between 1949-1958, when Ben left St Ives.

manner earlier competitive tensions. Adrian was the philanthropic host,<sup>42</sup> who has also been influential critic of Nicholson and Hepworth's art as well as a patron who bought their work. Gabo's symbolic capital was in his supremacy in terms of cosmopolitan recognition. Against these two, Ben placed himself as the *agent provocateur* of the English art scene, to begin with by appropriating the Gaboesque term construction for non-figurative art, but later settling for the broader term of abstraction. By the end of the war the tangled and tight network of local and national support systems that Ben managed to keep alive helped in determining Gabos' pre-war plans of immigrating to the USA, where he thought he would enjoy a more democratic aesthetic recognition.<sup>43</sup> With the collapse of the Carbis Bay Group Nicholson's new target for a strategic formation of an abstract avant-garde was redirected towards St Ives, with the very early intention of take-over expressed to whoever wanted to listen.<sup>44</sup>

In true modernist manner the 1985 catalogue privileges Nicholson's and Hepworth's life and work. But rather than individualised mimeographing, a group dynamic reflects more accurately the lived experience of wartime Carbis Bay. It consisted of three couples, six creative individuals, all of whose professional life has started prior to their arrival there. Margaret Mellis and Miriam Israel were juniors within the group both in terms of their age and their position in public acclaim. But each had a different set of priorities; accommodating Naum Gabo's career was Miriam's, a life committed to painting was Mellis's. It was a singular combination of a network based on like-minded, professional friends whose bonding had been based on personal support,<sup>45</sup> laced with a heavy dose of matrimonial relationships<sup>46</sup> non-matrimonial relationships, and bohemian leisure activities.

<sup>42</sup> In TAV 272 AB Mellis states that the decision to invite Ben and Barbara rather than Coldstream or the Sitwells, who then were closer friends of Adrian, was determined by the poverty and need for support of the Nicholson-Hepworth household.

<sup>43</sup> Miriam Gabo TAV 270 AB.

<sup>44</sup> Mellis (1976) notes to D. Brown TA 7817.6.

<sup>45</sup> Stokes wrote about Ben and Barbara; Gabo obtained his documents to remain in the UK through Winifred Nicholson's letter to her brother who intervened on his behalf; Gabo, Hepworth, Nicholson collaborated in

In addition to the core group there were also local individuals closely associated with them, most prominently Bernard Leach and Peter Lanyon. Leach, who became close to Gabo, had been the earliest modernist working in St Ives, with his and Hamada's 1920 first Japanese built kiln in the Western world (1920).<sup>47</sup> Lanyon was the young aspiring artist, who met and befriended Adrian on his 1936 painting visit to St Ives and went with his advice for a short time to study at Euston Road School. Lanyon came from an upper middle class family, whose artistic father played the piano and took photographs; thus he had both a domestic and local entrée to the art world. Following Adrian's advice he became Nicholson's student but his special bond with Gabo is evident in his early three-dimensional constructions made out of humble materials frequently with glass and transparent elements. In a sense Bernard Leach and Peter Lanyon provided the lifeline to the local disaffected artists, who had connections with SISA – Leach being a member, and Peter being on friendly terms with Borlase Smart, one of his many ex-teachers. For Leach professional activities centred in St Ives, where his pottery was and where he belonged to SISA, while family and socialising centred in Carbis Bay. In Carbis Bay he shared with Gabo an enthusiasm for Chess and also long discussions on spiritual matters, as well as discussions on the role of design for contemporary society.<sup>48</sup> Peter Lanyon became the youngest, keenest and most promising student disciple of the non-figurative, non-precious medium and spontaneous expression ethos that Gabo, Hepworth, and Nicholson shared at that moment in time. It was however

1936-7 on *Circle*, in an alignment aimed at creating a 'counter offensive' to the success of and attention to the 1936 Surrealist Exhibition.

<sup>46</sup> Much of the taped interviews is about the difficult relationships inter and intra couples. For instance, Margaret claimed that the Nicholsons were invited, rather than any other friends of Adrian because of his wish to help them out of London and their poverty. Once they were there, Adrian wanted Margaret to learn from Barbara's managerial abilities (Mellis 272 TAV). Adrian and Naum Gabo had between them a newly wed competition of who would get his wife pregnant first (information in conversation with Adrian Stokes biographer Richard Read on 29.7.02).

<sup>47</sup> His Orientalism does not only consist of bringing along Hamada and practising Japanese stylistic and formative elements in his ceramics, but even more so in his tiles and pots decorations and shapes, and his prints and poetry. These aspects are much neglected in the construction of 'St Ives'. The building he purchased for his pottery in 1920 is reputed to be the last traditionally built granite building in St Ives. See Oliver Watson (1985) 'The St Ives Pottery' in *St Ives* p 221. Thus the pottery, like his ceramics, and kiln represent an anti-modernist approach combined with Japanese tradition.

<sup>48</sup> Both W. Barns-Graham and M. Mellis, made comments to the effect that initially, prior to PSAC, Nicholson and Hepworth did not seek Leach's company due to their disregard for his pottery.

the special artistic and personal bond with Gabo that became the defining influence on Lanyon.<sup>49</sup> He gave Gabo his studio when he joined the air force in March 1940, and after the Gabos' departure to the USA the two corresponded regularly, affectionately, and intensely, both on a personal level and on the artistic one.<sup>50</sup> Lanyon continued to explore issues of space and embodied experience that sprang directly from Gabo's ideas about space. He promoted the modernity of constructivism and championed Gabo's ideas and art, even against his childhood friend Patrick Heron<sup>51</sup> and the curious bond between such different temperaments as John Wells and Peter Lanyon was largely based on their shared admiration for Gabo.<sup>52</sup> Neither Miriam Israel nor Margaret Mellis fitted professionally well into either of the groups. Both were juniors in terms of artistic reputations and, like their spouses and friends, outsiders to the region. Virtually no public evidence other than the listing of her name as an exhibitor exists of Miriam Israel's painting. It is this 'in-between' status that has brought about the marginalisation of Mellis and, in a different configuration, also W. Barns-Graham. W. Barns-Graham, who arrived at St Ives in March 1940, to be close to her friend Margaret Mellis and to learn from the authors of *Circle*, did not feel comfortable in the exclusive atmosphere at Little Park Owles and preferred to get involved in the local life and found for herself accommodation in St Ives, where she also joined SISA as well as the Newlyn Society of Artists.<sup>53</sup> Like her ECA years' friend, Peggy Mellis, she received postgraduate scholarships and awards, and was therefore professionally more experienced and advanced than Lanyon and Berlin, who were of her age group. She too, like Leach and Lanyon, acted as an intermediary between SISA and the self-declared

<sup>49</sup> During the period that Peter Lanyon served in the air force he let Gabo use his studio.

<sup>50</sup> For their correspondence see Margaret Garlake (1995) 'Peter Lanyon's Letters to Naum Gabo' *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. cxxvii, no. 1105 April pp. 233-41. According to Miriam Gabo Naum kept a portrait photograph of Peter on his desk all his life.

<sup>51</sup> See Hammer and Lodder (2000) p 312. Also Transcript of Peter Lanyon speaking to Lionel Miskin, (1962) TAV 211 AB.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Lanyon bought Little Park Owles after the Stokes left Carbis Bay and later when he became disillusioned with PSAC and wanted to create an alternative centre to it, he moved to Newlyn, living next to John Wells, who elected to live there in 1945 after he had left the Scilly Isles and gave up medicine. As for the esteem in which Gabo was held, the notes that Wells took down while Gabo gave his farewell speech at the party in Bernard Leach's house were carefully kept all his life and are now at the Tate Archive. Significantly Ben and Barbara were absent from that event.

<sup>53</sup> Of which she still is a member.

'moderns' of Carbis Bay, though unlike them she was, like the rest of the Carbis Bay nucleus group, also an outsider. Wilhemina Barns-Graham's presence in the region strengthened the Scottish regional emphasis, for the friends shared a common regional and educational background and had been on Study scholarships to France together. But Wilhelmina made her life and studio in St Ives and went to Carbis Bay only on occasional socialising ventures, especially when the guests also shared Scottish background. Such were the visits of Herbert Read, who lectured on modern art at Edinburgh university and ECA, when both Mellis and Barns-Graham were there, Norman Reid, whose wife was one of the students and close friends of Wilhelmina, or indeed any other intellectual visitor such as scientists or literary people.<sup>54</sup>

Peter Lanyon's family status made him a social equal to the Stokes,<sup>55</sup> but it is his 'age-group' and his artistic inexperience that has positioned him as subordinate to the established artist in Carbis Bay during the war years. His artistic output and activities made him a central local figure in 'St Ives' and his art has been evaluated as attaining maturity during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Not so with Mellis and Barns-Graham, since their age rather than their output or their previous experiences, determined their positioning with their age-set. While artistically their level of artistic and professional competence was in between the older and the disciple groups, their training in Edinburgh and in France have all but been ignored in the evaluation of their art. Unlike the men of their age Peter, Patrick, Terry who were all newcomers to art and yet were acclaimed as independent artists - Mellis and Barns-Graham, both of whom are still creative in new forms and expressions, have been cast as eternal disciples and their art subjected to a reductive misrepresentation.

<sup>54</sup> There was pressure exerted on Barns-Graham to become one of the Carbis Bay Group, by mocking her for her association with the 'St Ives academicians', according to her.

<sup>55</sup> Sven Berlin (1962) *The Dark Monarch: A Portrait from Within*, Gallery Press, expresses resentment for Lanyon's privileged social/economic status.



Age grouping had its immediate advantages and long-term disadvantages. Being only four years Margaret's junior, Peter Lanyon became Margaret's dancing partner<sup>56</sup> in their regular ventures into St Ives, in which she found a respite from the claustrophobic atmosphere of Little Park Owles.<sup>57</sup> The seniority of Hepworth-Nicholson and their insistence to retain as much as possible of their previous domestic arrangements became a priority in Little Park Owles, into which Margaret had to fit.<sup>58</sup> Mellis's studio became the nursery for the triplets and nanny, and she had to make do with setting up her easel in the corridor. At the time she still painted in a heady late Fauve inspired figurative manner, though her Euston School experience made her at times try to subdue her colours and experiment with primitivising her style as in *Regents Park*, 1938 (fig 41). At the same time Adrian's progress in painting was also heavily dependent on her support, as frequently he would have a clear idea of what he intended to paint but asked Margaret to draw for him the outline of the composition.<sup>59</sup>

Of all the inhabitants of Little Park Owles, only Margaret did not have a secluded space to paint in. She had to make do by setting up her easel every day wherever she could paint be it the kitchen or corridors.<sup>60</sup> She also of all the people had the responsibility to attend to the running of the household as smoothly as possible, a domestic burden she disliked immensely. Desperate to have more time for her paintings she invited her sister Ann to join them and help her with the running of Little Park Owles, in between her ballet classes in St

<sup>56</sup> Dancing has been a lifelong passion of Margaret and one that she kept alive until 1999, going regularly to tap and ballet dancing classes in Lowenstoft, as well as clubbing with her new agent, Kapil Jariwala and his partner.

<sup>57</sup> In TAV 272AB Mellis describes the conditions at Little park Owles and of all the individuals there she was the most put upon most of all for the first five months when the Hepworth-Nicholson household shared and to an extent took over the spaces available. Margaret lost her studio, and despite there being a cook and a nanny, she had to manage a household of three bohemian strong-willed individuals, each with different culinary and other household demands. For a young bride who was just adjusting to her wifely duties and determined to keep up her paintings it proved to be a very unhappy time. She even believes that that taxing time doomed her marriage to failure. Interview 20.1996.

<sup>58</sup> For Adrian their arrival meant that his writing studio doubled up to become also his painting studio. But Margaret lost hers. TAV 272 AB.

<sup>59</sup> Mellis frequently joked about many collectors who believe they have in their possession a Stokes while they really have a Mellis-Stokes. The same was reiterated by Richard Read in conversation 29.7.02.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with M. Mellis and TAV 272 AB.

Ives.<sup>61</sup> Within short time of the Nicholson-Hepworth family arrival there were frictions about most daily matters, from sleeping arrangements<sup>62</sup>, to diet requirements, and preferences of music while working.<sup>63</sup> In Margaret's mind she and Adrian were therefore subjected to pressures in their guest family relationship and were themselves deprived of the privacy that a young couple needs in order to work out their relationship. As in Adrian's previous relationship with Ben and Barbara personal and professional boundaries became blurred. Adrian's outspoken hope that Margaret might learn from Barbara's example efficient tidiness made things even harder on her. While Adrian became increasingly uncomfortable with the professional enthusiasm and attention that Margaret's paintings were attracting, especially by Ben. Things became even more difficult with her acquiescing to Ben and Gabo's pressure to try and make abstract constructions. It isolated Adrian's painting practice and he became the odd one out among the otherwise constructivists/abstractionists initially in and later around Little Park Owles, not only on the trajectory of figurative non-figurative paintings but also on the professional and amateurish one.<sup>64</sup> While on a personal level the presence of the evacuees complicated life for Mellis, her painting in spaces for all to see did attract the attention of Ben and Gabo both of whom impressed on her to use her talent for non-figurative art. It is though a curious fact that Ben, who rarely made collages himself, at least during this period, insisted that Mellis ought to do them herself.<sup>65</sup> The commitment to abstraction of Mellis was different to that of Lanyon.

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<sup>61</sup> It was Ann's total dedication to Adrian's all needs that Margaret suspects has made him leave her and set up house with Ann in Switzerland. It is perhaps an indication of Mellis's degree of absorption with her art that she did not notice or suspect anything; even after Adrian left Carbis Bay she had no idea who was the other woman in his life for quite a while. Information from interviews with Mellis and Bams-Graham.

<sup>62</sup> Prior to their arrival at Little Park Owles they had separate bedrooms because of Barbara's smoking habit and Ben's Asthma attacks, as well as her insistence on waking up to an alarm clock that irritated Ben.

<sup>63</sup> TAV 272 and interviews with me.

<sup>64</sup> Adrian's paintings, seem to be considered as amateurish in *St Ives* (1985) exhibition catalogue where none of his paintings are included, which is surprising since David Brown was a proud collector of his paintings. It could be that at that time his painting activity was considered as a privileged person's leisure activity. Mellis however does refer to his paintings at the time as being often over painted on top of her compositional drawings, as much as also Margaret Gardiner various leisure attempts Gardiner's attempts to copy one of Mellis's paintings that she had bought.

<sup>65</sup> Ben did make collages during the Carbis Bay years for birthday and Christmas cards. One of these, sent to Mellis, he later refused to acknowledge as made by him. He claimed that the poor quality of paper and glue used to make them ended up in work that he rather not put his name to, conversation Mellis 20.10.96.

Her level of sophistication and experience prior to the making of the construction collages remains a moot matter. Lanyon, however, fitted perfectly into of the paradigm claimed in 1985 to be one of the hall marks of 'St Ives', direct spontaneity as stated in the catalogue: "St Ives commitment to the direct and untutored vision."<sup>66</sup>

But to set himself up as the new leader of the modern movement it was important to Ben Nicholson to establish a school of followers committed to spontaneous expression of non-figurative art. The Carbis Bay years were effectively used for that purpose, as his promotion and inclusion of the works of his group of followers in the 1942 exhibition *New Movements in Art, Contemporary Work in England* shows. Mounted at London Museum it was the first of many other instances in which exhibitions were used as strategic spring-board for his positioning. Mellis, with Ben's encouragement and selection, showed her collages in the Constructivist Section of that exhibition. This first exhibition will establish a pattern of restrictive inclusion in group-exhibitions where her art would serve as a reductive illustration for ideas that do not centre on her subjectivity, but serve a generalised and non-differentiating image of a claimed avant-garde. Why did Mellis change from figurative oils to abstraction? She cannot offer an answer other than once she started doing collages she found that they were fun and wanted to carry on.<sup>67</sup> There might be a hint or rather suggestion at the reasons, in her claim that once everything fell apart (referring to her marriage break-up) she stopped altogether making collages and went right back to square one to rediscover oil paint.<sup>68</sup> Whatever the reasons might have been for taking up making abstract collages and later dropping the practice altogether, what emerges clearly is the degree to which personal affairs and artistic ones were intertwined during the war years phase at Carbis Bay.

<sup>66</sup> *St Ives* (1985)p 215 in the 'post 1964' section about how Bryan Pearce fits into the category of 'St Ives'.

<sup>67</sup> Interview 20.10. 96.

<sup>68</sup> Contrary to the repeated claims of Gabo, Hepworth and Nicholson about unavailability of materials, Mellis insists that she did not experience any shortage of materials. Making collages was a purely artistic decision in her opinion. Interview 20.10.96.

In this sense of familial-cum-collegial network of the avant-garde it emerges that, other than in the case of Barbara Hepworth, a marital break up affected women's reputation in a devastating way. Winifred Nicholson, Margaret Mellis, W. Barns-Graham, Janet Leach, all have suffered from their separations to a much greater degree than their respective partners.<sup>69</sup> In the case of Margaret Mellis her new attachment to the collagist Francis Davison, her return to Matisse/Bonnardian figurative paintings, and her move to Cap d'Antibes for three years was later evaluated tacitly as a regression and as not fulfilling her early promise.

While much critical attention has been focused around the meaning of figurative landscape in relation to abstraction<sup>70</sup> and how the question can be settled with the rhetorical claim for the unconditional superiority of abstract, far less attention has been directed to the varied uses and meanings of the terms constructivist and/or abstract.<sup>71</sup>

Mellis's stay in Cornwall between 1938-1946 determined and ended the Carbis Bay phase, and was mapped to the war years. 1946, the year she left Carbis Bay, was the year in which the 'young moderns' made their first concerted appearance at the Crypt of the deconsecrated Mariner Church, as a section of SISA. These two temporal framing specificities of Mellis's involvement in the South West offer a neat discursive focus for the definition of the group's identity and of her place within it.

<sup>69</sup> Bohemian serial monogamies seem to enhance a male artist's reputation. As for Adrian Stokes, his relatively more reclusive subsequent years might have more to do with other personal tragedies than with his divorce.

<sup>70</sup> Those who focused on the work of Peter Lanyon inevitably had to emphasise his particular expressions and notion of landscape. Stephens's (1997) unpublished Ph.D. thesis contains the work landscape in its title and in a predetermined way takes as given that landscape is the main genre of 'St Ives' artists. Stephens's focus on landscape in his monograph on Peter Lanyon (2000) is more justified. See also Margaret Garlake (1998) *Peter Lanyon*, London, Tate Gallery, St Ives Artists Series, Tate Publishings.

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Bann (ed) (1974) *The Tradition of Constructivism, The Documents of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art*, London, Thames and Hudson. In the section about Constructivism in the UK, pp 202-222, he includes only the *Circle* and Gabo as relevant. Also Lodder and Hammer (2000) pp 237-8 240, 241, 244; 280,282,306 338.

### Mellis's art works

After meeting Adrian Stokes in Paris at the Cézanne exhibition in 1937 Margaret's personal life became increasingly inextricable from her professional one. She had been in Paris on a Fellowship from Edinburgh College of Art, and worked/studied in the academy of Lhote's and Ozenfant, one of the numerous free academies that had mushroomed in Paris with its growing reputation as the capital of modernism.<sup>72</sup> She recalls that tuition there amounted to being allocated space and left to her own devices, with either of the masters arriving once a week for an approving brief conversation.<sup>73</sup> In her estimate the benefit was more of having a studio to work, where she could experiment with aspects of art that she could see in the many museums and galleries of Paris. With hindsight it seemed to Margaret that she had achieved there a broadening of her artistic education, a richer visual access to contemplating art works and the works being available for repeated visits and consideration.<sup>74</sup> Having been tutored by Peploe during his final year in Edinburgh College of Art, must have prepared her, or even pre-conditioned her taste to look at a specific aspect of French Modernism. In vain would one look for signs of Lhote or Ozenfant in her early work, although she maintains that on her return to Edinburgh after that year her colours were more daring than previously.<sup>75</sup> Her affinity then is with the French artists who liberated colour, an affinity that had started with her studying under Peploe earlier in ECA, and which has been even further enhanced by her encounter with the work of Bonnard and Matisse.<sup>76</sup> The impact of the Edinburgh College of Art cannot be, must not be, disregarded, considering that all its students of the same generation, who have become artists of international and national recognition - Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Bill Gear, and Alan

<sup>72</sup> About Paris and the independent academies in Montparnasse, see Cottington (1998) pp. 47-8, 123, 194.

<sup>73</sup> She likes telling how she overheard once, when arriving late to the studio, Lhote praising her work. The anecdote is told with an equal mixture of pride and embarrassment (my taped interview 20.10.96) which I like to believe is due to her recognition of the dependency of women painters on men artists' approval.

<sup>74</sup> In our conversations she could not list exactly which exhibitions she saw, except that of Cézanne. She does however talk about being impressed by Bonnard and Matisse, without specifying when on the various visits to Paris she actually saw them work.

<sup>75</sup> 20.10.96

<sup>76</sup> For a good evocation and documentation of ECA during the 1930s see Lynn Green (2001) Chapter 2 pp 24-53, fn 77.

Davie - have all in various ways employed the expressive qualities of paint and colour. For Margaret painting and viewing art in Paris must have been a first-hand experience of elements of possibilities that she had been taught during her students' years.

What constituted modernism for Margaret Mellis in Paris 1933 can be gleaned from her early work. The earliest paintings that was exhibited is a *Self-Portrait* of 1935; being a self-selected exhibition, declares in her estimate it was the first, the earliest painting in which she considered to have found her own stylistic expression. It is rather neat that it should also be a painting expressing a double declaration of subjectivity, in its subject matter, a confident self portraiture, and in style, her own voice (Fig 44). No stylistic affinity whatsoever can be seen between Mellis and her Parisian tutor, Lhote or Ozenfant, begs the question why does she refer to this phase so frequently.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, what precisely is the meaning of Mellis enrolling later when in London, at the Euston School, rather than the Ozenfant Academy<sup>78</sup> remains an unanswered issue. It might have been a choice made both for personal as well as professional reasons since she at that time sought to tie her life and art to that of her husband to be, Adrian Stokes. Therefore, the rejection of Ozenfant's Academy might have been one made for reasons of stylistic preferences as well as emotional attachment she developed at the time:

At that time I was still interested in Matisse and Bonnard so I didn't appreciate Mondrian and Gris properly- but later when I saw Mondrian's paintings in Holland and Gris in Paris Ben's words came to life.<sup>79</sup>

The statement verifies two aspects. It provides information about what 'The School of Paris' represented for her in the early 1930s. But in addition to that informative, empirical

<sup>77</sup> I did not see any of her work of that period in her studio as the three floors of her home/studio is stacked to its capacity with paintings of hers and of Davison her second husband and of friends. They have as yet not been listed and arranged according to chronological or indeed thematic order.

<sup>78</sup> In relation to Ozenfant as a teacher there is an interesting investigation to follow, for he had opened an Academy in London about which very little material seems to exist except for brief mention that Leonora Carrington studied there.

<sup>79</sup> In 1984 Mellis added some corrective notes to the transcript of her original interview conducted by David Lewis and Sarah Fox Pitt in 21<sup>st</sup> May 1981. In these additional notes she writes about the initial discrepancy of tastes between herself and Ben Nicholson. His conversations with her were about the art of Mondrian, Juan Gris and Miro. TAV 272 AB.

evidence it also exposes a pattern of internalisation and assimilation. Just as assimilating the lessons of colourism to which she had been introduced at ECA<sup>80</sup> required time and first-hand viewing in Paris, equally, the full meaning of Mondrian and Gris became clear to her only after seeing the works.<sup>81</sup>

While Mellis, and indeed Winfred Nicholson and W. Barns-Graham, took the professional, strict path of education that then became available for women, there is all the same a need to qualify the cultural and dominant institutional structures operating at the time and to examine how these impacted on their formation and self-perception as professional artists. From the perspective and perhaps wisdom of hindsight, what emerges is a two-way pull that was in operation, in the context of educating women in becoming independent subjects who could voice their views. On the educational, institutional and at times personal levels, women of talent and determination were encouraged on their path at the beginning of their artistic venture. That seemingly liberating new world order was however run by, and inevitably the teaching on all the levels was modelled on, exemplar men. This historical condition, like biological essentialism, has then become a self-defining mode. For women artists there seems to be a trend of 'inscribed chaperoning' of their formative years. For them, unlike their male colleagues, whose lineage of teachers and self-selected models for homage and affinities are valued as positives, do not seem to free their status from its formative phase of 'dependency'. The 'inscribed chaperoning' trend manifests itself by a tacit assumption of women's dependency on their fathers'/ teachers'/ partners' modular male examples, rather than being given their own subjectivity. Thus, after the initial period

<sup>80</sup> Lynn Green (2001) gives thorough and lively overall view of ECA, Chapter 2 pp 24-55.

<sup>81</sup> Deepwell, Catherine (1991) *Women Artists in Britain Between the Two World Wars*, Birkbeck, University of London, unpublished Ph.D. thesis discusses the professional paths of British Women artists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. She has a very thorough and informative chapter there about women's art education. This is the only detailed study of that time and kind that I am aware of.

of education and encouragement, there is a narrowing down in the professional support system denying them equal public exposure or appraisal.<sup>82</sup>

It might be useful at this point to think about what she was looking for rather than at what W Barns-Graham did not. The meeting between Adrian Stokes and Peggy Mellis, the name by which she was known then to her friends, is less of a coincidence than it might seem. She visited the Cézanne exhibition time and again, being very excited about what she considered a totally new way of using local colour in paint. Adrian, who like her could hardly contain his own excitement in front of the paintings, matched her enthusiasm and they embarked on a long analytical conversation. The excitement about Cézanne then became one and the same as her excitement about the way that Adrian had articulated his vision of painting. While she had been wrestling with how to make colour expressive in her paintings, he offered her for the first time a refreshing *theory*, the first that addressed issues of space and colour, which she had been interested, in rather than in the by then tedious claim of 'significant form'. It seemed to her to be a healing antidote to the omnipresent repetitive discussion at the time of Fry and Bell's idea of 'significant form'; an idea repeated by others who had made his concept their own.<sup>83</sup> Reconsidering the art of Lhote and in particular that of Ozenfant during the mid 1930s shows their persistent grappling with formalist issues as an unresolved but urgent problematic emerging as a legacy of Cubism. She repeatedly has claimed, in 1981, 1984, and during my conversations with her through 1996-1999, that colour had been her main concern for the period of post graduation, fellowships, and early years with Adrian Stokes, right up to the time when she hosted Ben Nicholson and

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<sup>82</sup> Deepwell calculated that "between 1910-1986 of the 214 one person exhibitions at the Tate Gallery only 8 (less than 4%) were devoted to the work of women artists", p 21. She also calculates the general funding of purchases, gifts & bequests according to gender between 1914-45 and finds that, of a total of 436 purchases, only 13%, 58 in total, were of works of women artists. In her Appendix 17, p 180.

<sup>83</sup> I am paraphrasing Mellis's interview.



Hepworth, at which point Ben, after being impressed by her painting, insisted that she ought to try collages and abstraction.<sup>84</sup>

The encounter between Adrian Stokes the aesthete, as he had been at the time, and Mellis the young but tenacious Scottish painter, was as fortunate as it was fortuitous for both of them. In 1936 Adrian had been reading critically Roger Fry's *Cézanne*, of 1927.<sup>85</sup> In his note book of 1936 Stokes quotes studiously Fry's comments on Colour, as well as comments about his disagreements with Fry's perception of Cézanne's artistry. The obvious interest in reading the diary in conjunction with his article is that there is a sense in which the diary reveals more of the thought processes of Stokes, of his selective attention in reading and strong attitudes, especially of disagreement, as for instance in this passage from Page 1 of the diary:

To 'modulate' rather than to model, Cézanne would say, had the 'notion that changes of colour correspond to movement of planes.' It is not the (?) of colour of the impressionists. No parts of the surface more or less expressive than other, which is not true of Impressionists."

" ' One has the impression that each of the objects is infallibly in its place, and that its place was ordained for it from the beginning of all things, so majestically and serenely does it (beach?) there.' ... '...the forms are held together by some strict harmonic principle almost like that of the canon of Greek Architecture.'

There are several points of interest here relevant to the scholarship of Adrian Stokes: first the interest in the word 'modulate' as distinct from 'to model', which is an early version of his contrasting concepts of 'modelling' and 'carving'; second, his attempt to establish his aesthetic theory on a metaphorical transposition of architectural principles into aesthetic qualities of two dimensional arts of relief and painting; and thus his lifelong interest in the representation of visual evaluation in words. On the verso side of the page where this chain of quotes and thoughts are written Stokes wrote in pencil, probably at some later date: "Relevant to the [?] idea of painting" and marks the importance of this with double lines along the margin. To date relatively much and increasingly has been written about the

<sup>84</sup> See for instance TAV 272AB transcript p 71, lns. 10-33. "MM: ...[A]ctually what was nice about it was that it was very exhilarating having Ben about, being interested in what [I]...did, you know."

<sup>85</sup> Hogarth Press, Pellerin Collection, as he annotates in his 1936 notebook, p 1 in TA 8816.56.

works and thoughts of both Adrian and Ben. The context in which their work and thoughts are relevant to the practice of Margaret Mellis is what interests me here.

### **Mellis's early years**

Since her student's days, Peggy Mellis had proved to be a determined and promising artist.<sup>86</sup> She prides herself to have been the youngest student to be accepted to the College, after having decided against the other professional options of music or dance.<sup>87</sup> Although it is not overtly expressed in her art, her conversation and much of her daily life is affected by her identification with things Chinese, an affinity that she has attributed<sup>88</sup> to her birthplace in 1914, where her parents were posted as a missionaries. She believes that her earliest memories are of the family sailing back to Britain on her parents return to Scotland. Whatever the factual accuracy of that memory, I would like to argue that the event had a lasting and important impact on her artistic imagination and expressive quest.<sup>89</sup> While her various artistic mediums and formats deny her oeuvre from being reduced to a single identifiable signature style, there is in her art a continuous and multifaceted exploration of issues of time, seas, distance, and spatial explorations. It would be wrong to assign to the one biographical 'Odyssey' of early childhood a causal impact on her art. Rather, I would argue that this personal family myth was transformed in Margaret's mature artistic imagination to fit theories and interests that she had developed in her early formative years. Her student's interest in colour found its theoretical justification in Adrian's theories.

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<sup>86</sup> Wilhelmina recalled on many occasions two anecdotes that illustrate this. First, that whenever Peggy arrived late to live-classes, at Edinburgh she would make her way in a determined way to the front, ignoring the annoyance of the other students. Wilhemina also repeatedly recalled that it has been taken as a certainty that both she and Peggy would make it in the professional world of art. Denise Peploe was also marked for success but he failed to shake off the weight of his father's reputation. While William Gear, who was their junior, has been a surprise success.

<sup>87</sup> Interviews and conversations.

<sup>88</sup> Margaret's belief in Chinese horoscopes is more serious than a frivolous leisure activity. She also tries to keep a Chinese-inspired health-conscious diet.

<sup>89</sup> It is difficult to ascertain what of Oriental visual arts was available to her at home and childhood, other than her memory of her mother and Ann her younger sister embroidering Chinese themes. In this respect it is also interesting to note that Ann Stokes, herself now in her eighties, has taken up pottery and much of her work is of elaborated ceramic highly decorated utilitarian objects, which are freely inspired by Oriental themes and colours.

Margaret's love of the sea, and physically active life date back to her Scottish childhood, in which she and her siblings were regularly taken on adventurous sailing and camping ventures with their father. On most of these instances the whole truth of their exposure to danger was kept a secret from her mother, who did anyway suspect some of it. In Margaret's memory thus, her father was the person who opened up adventure and excitements, her mother on the other hand, though of artistic talent, being the more careful domesticated and disciplinarian of the two.<sup>90</sup> Margaret retained a lifelong commitment to various physical leisure activities, such as dancing and a daily morning swim in the North Sea, in the same dedicated way that she kept time for her art making. What I argue here is that the impact of the political context of the end of an Empire on her biography, compounded with the childhood exhilaration of sailing experiences of exhilaration have been transposed in adulthood to become a symbolic quest for a configuration of national, personal and gender identities. This configuration is related to what has evolved into, in my reading of her art, a symbolic repeated expression of notions of what can be termed generally as issues of framing, and more specifically, of space, both physical and temporal, and of time.

Between 1929 and 1933 she was lucky to be one of the last students to have been taught by the legendary S. J. Peploe (1871-1935), who was the Scottish follower of the French colorists: Derain, Matisse and Bonnard, and who had developed his own colourist mode of broad impastoed brash-strokes, and a particular harmony of sonorous saturated purples and deep reds. The Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) during these years had been by far more advanced in relation to its direct contact and knowledge of French Fauvist modernism. Much of the energy at the ECA was due to the appointment in 1932 of Hubert Lindsay Wellington (1878-1967) who further encouraged and actively promoted greater connections

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<sup>90</sup> What matters in this instance is how Margaret remembers her parents rather than how they really were.

with knowledge of international trends in the arts.<sup>91</sup> With revolutionary ideas and the availability of funds with the 1930 Andrew Grand substantial bequest made available, students who excelled could enjoy grants for studios to work in, for travelling scholarships and further post-graduate scholarships, by far more advanced and enterprising than those offered by any art institutions in England. The appointment of Herbert Read as an academic lecturer in the history of art, and in particular modern north European art, was also a feature that made German Expressionism, Edward Munch and issues about National traits of art feature high on the lecture programme and in available exhibitions that he organised there.<sup>92</sup>

In her formal art education at ECA, then in the Lhote academy in Paris, Mellis followed a well-established Scottish art tradition. William Gillis (1898-1973) had studied there with Lhote and both he and Léger had continuously Scottish artists studying in their academies, as did later William Gear. The legacy of French Fauvist colourism is one that she made her own during her student years and postgraduate awards and scholarship years. *Palms and Olives, Rapallo, Italy*, c.1937 (fig 45)<sup>93</sup> is indicative of Bonnard/Dufy-like soft colour harmonies, with a high viewing point. The Mediterranean, is depicted in pale blue and extends above the upper frame, seen behind lush soft foliage, with palm trees, the sign of exotic holiday locality as are the white sails, all depicted with a feathery quality, that reads as Summer's haze. In contrast to the soft relaxed mood of the seaside resort, is the more intimate, urban expressionistic, harsh treatment of her *Self-Portrait*, 1935 (fig 44).<sup>94</sup> Painted after her return from two years of travel and study in France, and while taking up a fellowship at Edinburgh College of Art, the image reveals itself in a layered manner. Its expression is an indication of a moment of hesitation and indecision between various artistic

<sup>91</sup> Lynn Green (2001) *A Studio Life* pp 28-34 gives a well documented and lively account of the atmosphere and curriculum as well as sketchy profile of prominent teachers and students of these years at ECA.

<sup>92</sup> His enthusiasm for German ideas and art manifested itself already in 1927 when he translated and edited Wilhelm Worringer, *Form in Gothic*, London, G. P. Putnam's.

<sup>93</sup> Illustrated in *Margaret Mellis Austin/Desmond Fine Art Catalogue* (2001) p 17.

<sup>94</sup> Illustrated in *Margaret Mellis: A Retrospective* (1997) exhibition catalogue, City Art Centre, Edinburgh and Kapil Hariwala Gallery, London, Illustration 1.

modes she had encountered so far. The patterned background, obviously a rejected earlier attempt at abstraction, remains visible, not only as ground for the image but also as penetrating through its 'solidity', its depicted mass, at various points, most obviously at the lower part, under the dark broad, dry black outlines of her garment, as well as from under her hair, at the top right side. The patterned horizontal and vertical background, looking like a colourful weave of saturated colours, is used to appear as a paler highlight against dark passages of the figure. The most solid object of the painting is the unnaturally cylindrical form of her neck, where volume has been attained by way of tone and warmth, pale blue for highlight, (left side of neck and cheeks) and dark sienna for shadow (on the right). She employed the pigments' warmth to work against their traditional use of *chiaroscuro*, while leaving tonality to act as the illusionary device. The portrait's red impastoed line, that represents the bridge of her nose, is probably a variant on Matisse's *The Green Line*, (fig 46) an essay on colour saturation and perception. The original, abstract painting/background is blocked out only around the face, with warm adjacent siennas ranging from yellows, through orange to reds. These too create space by way of tonal contrast, while denying it through the innate projective quality of the warm colours. Thus, what is evident about her art at this point are: the attempt to assimilate the lessons of Fauvist use of colour and the Scottish brushwork; the painting also bears evidence of her toying with abstraction prior to her encounter with Ben Nicholson.

Nicholson's impact on Mellis's work was her introduction to abstract collage making. In this narrow sense, her representation as an abstract constructivist in the 1985 exhibition was accurate, and surprisingly of an essentializing that is of an extremely different model to that essentialising that the art of Winifred Nicholson had been subjected to. Why is it, one may ask, that Winifred Nicholson and Marlow Moss were not been included in 'St Ives', while Mellis, who prior to the war years in Little Park Owles and immediately afterwards painted in a figurative manner (though later she returned to abstractions), has been represented only

as an abstract collagist? Very few collages are known to have been made by Ben Nicholson.<sup>95</sup> One can but assume that positioning Mellis as his follower/disciple, at the same group category as John Wells and Peter Lanyon, as he had done in the 1942 section of Constructivism at the London Museum, Ben set a range of expressions against which he appeared as the old master. In the case of Mellis, indeed of the same age as Lanyon but with greater educational and professional experience, she has been thus positioned in a double marginal status, to the old master, as well as to her own age set. On a personal level it added yet another facet of disagreement between her and Adrian.

The question of independence, finding one's own voice and style as opposed to being 'status chaperoned', is a complex issue in the case of Mellis. Her paradigm of strategic manoeuvring her career is fraught with contradictions. While in many ways she has been her own person and a creative one when it comes to either positioning herself or to articulating her lineage or indeed to her overall artistic intention, she refers to men mentors. As a student at ECA: Peplow, Cadell and Hunter;<sup>96</sup> in Paris, Lhote is named despite the difference in their style; she visited the Euston Road School in 1938 in order to accompany Adrian in London; at Carbis Bay it was Nicholson who insisted she made a collage. What emerges from this is the reality of women artists who wanted to paint and turn it into their professional vocation too. They had to learn from the only academic teachers both in national academies and private ones: men artists were the only option. The same applied to early stages of career life and formative years, where networking and reliance on influential individuals was paramount in the strategic manoeuvring that they had to submit themselves in order to be taken seriously. It is within this double bind, between dependency and only

<sup>95</sup> He tended to make collages as greeting cards and Christmas cards during the war years according to W. Barns-Graham and M. Mellis. Mellis at a later stage when she was in dire financial difficulties tried to send one of these to an art auction house, but Ben refused to concede that he had made it.

<sup>96</sup> See Mel Gooding (1997) in *Margaret Mellis Retrospective*. No pg no. Also interviews with the artist by me.

relative independence possible, that Mellis had to juggle her creativity and her reputation management.

So what did abstraction mean to Mellis? It was a manner of joining the most advanced British artistic group at the time. It enabled her to exercise her already developed sense of composition.<sup>97</sup> It was more practical to collage paper during the time of austerity and paper was easier to come by than paint and canvas. It also meant an opportunity for her as indeed it did for every single women abstractionist, to escape into a contemporary mode of practice that as yet, so they believed,<sup>98</sup> did not contain gendered associations as for instance figurative or still life did. In effect the women's misguided belief then was that with the new pursuit of purity, which with its essentialism claimed universality (that amounted to an a-historical view), the gendered differentiation had come to an end and merit alone would determine final appraisal of the works of art.

Another aspect of Mellis's self-positioning that illustrates the tangled relationship between dependency and independent creativity is her appropriation and redefinition of masculine critical terminology in her verbal explanation of the meaning of her art. 'Getting it right' is an expression she uses frequently in describing her process of creativity.<sup>99</sup> A more critical term she uses to describe the qualities of a work that has attained the desired standard of expression is that it has a carving quality as opposed to modelling, a term she retained, appropriated and redefined from her first husband Adrian Stokes. This tendency of appropriating terms and using them to suit one's own purposes, is not unusual in modernism as I have argued above in the changing meanings and use of the term 'constructivism'.

<sup>97</sup> Mellis often joked about several paintings in the possession of collectors who do not know that they had a Mellis and a Stokes all thrown into one. Her claim was also verified by Adrian's biographer Richard Beer in a conversation at Bristol University's Stokes conference 28<sup>th</sup> July 2002.

<sup>98</sup> Mark Cheetham argues convincingly that the discourse of essentialist abstract work based on Schopenhauer "excluded all women on principle." p xvii in Mark Cheetham (1991) *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>99</sup> Mel Gooding (1997) and also in my interviews.

### Mellis's stylistic periods<sup>100</sup>

From the two retrospective exhibitions of Mellis (1997 & 2001) emerge two clear messages: that Mellis's abundance of work cannot be reduced to a signature style and that she considers her recent work, the constructions she makes out of found wood and driftwood, (since 1978) as the pinnacle, the summation of her art. But the selection for her 1997 retrospective about which she had the ultimate say (since it was curated by Jariwala, her new agent) reflects her own appraisal of the significant stages of her creative career.

One of the earliest works exhibited there, in the '1938-52 Still-life and Landscape' section, is *Regents Park*, 1938 (fig 41)<sup>101</sup> which, Mellis recalled painting in London prior to her marriage. Its schematic, formulaic tree branches and the perspective defying upright lane on the right hand side indicate the then in vogue primitivising tendency, which she probably had encountered when at the Euston Road School. The geometric simplicity and chiming shapes of square hedges with lawn, arched tree tops and shrubs, dark cylindrical upright of the tree trunk and the terracotta path, all arranged along the pictorial plane, reveal their faux-naïve quality by their contrast to the sketchy but spatially and anatomically convincing shapes of the man walking with his dog. Another interesting observation is that the colour harmonies of subdued greens and yellows and ochre, which are usually used in the literature as an indication of A. Wallis's or St Ives' colours on the artists' palette, were used by Mellis prior to her encounter with either.

*Palms and Olives, Rapallo, Italy* (Fig 45) though dated c.1937 in the 2001 retrospective catalogue, was painted according to Mellis during her honeymoon, and therefore was

<sup>100</sup> I am giving this survey of her artistic periods not so much for my thesis's argument but more for the reason that so far no verbal survey of her work has as yet appeared in any form of publication.

<sup>101</sup> No.2 illustrated in the catalogue. I went through this exhibition with Mellis in which she explained the time, and meanings of the work. Therefore, whenever I refer to her opinions, they are based on that July 1997 discussion.



— painted later than *Regents Park*.<sup>102</sup> The two paintings differ in all aspects, other than that both are 'landscape paintings' with a high horizon line. *Regents Park* is a landscape format canvas, *Palms and Olives*, a portrait format. The high viewing point is forced, patterned in the first, and spatially convincing in the second; colour harmonies are earthy, pigments muddled in the first- pastel harmonies scintillating with whites alluding to light in the second. The foreground emptiness as the scarcity of foliage and the few foraging birds on the ground in the first painting all speak of winter austerity in *Regents Park*. The density of the foreground in *Palms and Olives*, in terms of representing a mass of tree top foliage and in terms of prismatic colour use in the foreground, beyond which the leisure associations of sea breeze and sails are seen all painted with light touches assimilating the light rays – all impart a sense of summer's fecundity, well being and mental and physical élan. The significance for my argument in comparing these two early paintings is not whether Mellis moved from naturalism to primitivism and back to naturalism, but rather an observation of what has been already an element of her work at that stage, namely that of the use of space for expressive purposes. What these two so different paintings share is an indication of an early exploration of the means of art in, and of space.

The third landscape exhibited in this section *Trees, Chateau des Enfants, Cap d'Antibes*, 1949-50, painted during her year in southern France with her second husband the collagist Francis Davison. It was painted after the meagre war years in Carbis Bay, and after her four years commitment to collage (she returned to painting in 1945). In the foreground are painted flowers in saturated colours, their petals defined by a single, or two fluid brush-strokes. The detailed gaze at growth, at vernal rebirth has to be read in relation to her emotion of new personal and global start. *Syleham*, a dark painting with black background, bearing the name of her new Suffolk village, where she and Francis Davison had a small

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<sup>102</sup> With Mellis not being able any longer to relate precisely to questions of dating and with the dates and facts no longer being verified by her, the reversal of the order indicates the assumptions made by the curator that she must have moved from 'Bonnardian' style of paint application to a 'primitivising' one.

farm,<sup>103</sup> represents again a different mood. There was nothing Mellis wanted to comment about this painting, but liked the fact that the hanging was not strictly chronological, and how pleased she was with the contrasts that emerged from the proximity of the Antibes and Syleham paintings when hung next to each other. Even with hindsight and in retrospect Mellis' notion of space, in this instance temporal spatial collapse revealed to her new meanings and curious chance juxtaposition.

The collage years –1940 to 45 – in Little Park Owles she considers as containing three phases. During the first phase she produced collages that are strongly based on still-life compositions, such as the *1<sup>st</sup> Collage* July 1940 (fig 42) and *3<sup>rd</sup> Collage* July 1940 (fig 43), which she describes as a table with things. Thematically these relate to her earlier, *White Still-life* (fig 47) oil exhibited, but there is also a stylistic break from naturalism, a break made more pronounced because of the genre similarity between the early oil painting and the reduction to basic forms in the early phase collages. The second phase of collage work was that in which she tried to get altogether away from any representation and to do pure forms, mathematical shapes – following Gabo's example<sup>104</sup> – of ovals and lines, as in *Collage with Dark Red Oval*, c.1941,<sup>105</sup> mixed media on card. Towards the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942 she introduced words, or rather paper that included words, into the collages, this phase Mellis thinks of as being her third phase of which *Blue, Green, Red and Pink Collage*, 1941 (fig 48) is an example. The expression of these collages, being of small scale and of paper, now faded, but which has been from the start of mundane quality, of simple labels and papers that were available during the war years, projects a feeling of timidity and an expression that anticipates that of *arte povera* in its unassuming nature,

<sup>103</sup> They had to leave Chateau des Enfants after the foster parents of Davison decided to sell it. They moved to Syleham in 1950 to a small farm, and the next few years proved to have been of great economic and physical hardship.

<sup>104</sup> Mellis's words.

<sup>105</sup> No 3 in the 1997 exhibition, 21 x 33 cms. Colour illustration in the catalogue.

rather than linking these collages to the practice of *objets trouvés*,<sup>106</sup> because of the use of basic-material available in domestic shopping during the war-years. After the break-up of her marriage to Adrian Stokes and the turmoil that followed she stopped making collages and according to her never returned to do any. While her version of events is indicative of the reasons and has to be considered as such I would also argue that her most recent works, the constructions of driftwood, contain elements of the collages of the war years. Margaret's linking of the marriage break-up with her rejection of collage-making begs for a psychoanalytical reading of the purpose and her intention in making them. Her 1997 explanation of phases, periods, according to stylistic variation indicate her familiarity with the artistic evolution of modernist paradigms. But the categorical statement that links the end of collage with her marriage break-up orientates interpretation of these collages towards reading them even more strongly not as works that seek to express universal purism but rather as an alternative to, maybe even a metonym of, domestic order. Reading them thus makes them, in addition to their exploration and experimental aspects, also a stance for appreciation. In domestic terms they replace her lack of housewifely inclination, in professional terms they claim her to be on a par with the 'older', already established members of the Carbis Bay Group.

Two pictures painted in the early 1950s at Syleham are at one and the same time a summation of her exploration so far and an articulation of the directions she will take up in the future. The colourful and rounded shapes painting *Compotier on a Window Sill*, c 1950<sup>107</sup> and in *Spotted Jug* of the same year (fig 49) as well as the angular minimalist *Match Box Relief*, 1952.<sup>108</sup> The mundane subject of the *Compotier* is rendered in an unusual composition with a white line dividing the field of vision into two. The spatial

<sup>106</sup> Curiously she claims not to have known at the time Kurt Schwitters' collages. Nicholson might not have come across them, but Gabo knew him from Germany where he together with Richter, Raul Hausmann and Hanna Höch, formed "what Lissitzky described as 'the nucleus of German Constructivism'." Hammer and Lodder (2000) p 114.

<sup>107</sup> No 4 in illustrations of 1997 retrospective catalogue.

<sup>108</sup> Illust.no. 5 in 1997 retrospective.

ordering of colours in either of the two sides is a reversal of the other in its warm/cold and tonal values. The background on the right is of a deep Prussian-blue, against which a white outlined bowl is seen heaped with fruit painted in saturated touches of reds and yellows. On the other side the background is dominated in the upper corner by a yellow window, against which the body and leg of the *Compotier* are painted in white, its content is dark, possibly empty or else darkened by the effect of *contre jour*. In experimenting with either Cézanne's or Braque's recent explorations of black and white in relation to space and volume, the two halves of the bowl do not seem to make one coherent naturalistic vessel. The visual conundrum turns on two kinds of visual obstructions: an object only half perceived when seen through a curtain, or when seen against strong light. It is a meditation initiated by domestic intimism and taken into a quest about the nature of vision.

**Match Box Relief** is a completely different kind of painting. Any kind of spatial allusion into the depth of the field of vision is denied and reversed. The depiction is of an object superimposed on its larger ground and painted in few graphic angular shapes, painted in flat and opaque colours: blue, black, white, and three touches of red for the match heads. The only painterly element is the circle on the white ground and the letter M, that were depicted by way of clearing the wet white paint in order to reveal the ground. M could stand for the depiction, that is, for matches but equally for Margaret or even Mellis. Rendering the picture as an object in this complex and deliberate manner links the work to the way Mondrian framed his work, a practice which was carried out in a lesser spatial manner in Ben Nicholson's idiosyncratic 'box framing' or maybe there is here another attempt to interpret Adrian's notion of carving in Mellis's own way. Her creative and individualistic understanding of the Stokes notion gives of a work that, despite its flatness, projects through its power of expression into the space of the room. Mellis, who keeps all the volumes of Stokes' books on a bookshelf in her studio, obviously is familiar with his theories but then at one and the same time makes independent creative use of them.

Contrary to the 'Chaperoning model' which indicates the lineage of influences as a reductive, restrictive impact on the originality of women painters, that are never credited with internalising impact and making it their own, Mellis example can be seen as the contrary. It can be seen as an irreverent attitude to the original sequence of rationalisation, and a 'devil-may-care' attitude to intellectual preciousness, or else as an expression of finding her own voice and selecting, from the ideas and art she comes across, only the elements that are relevant to her own quest.<sup>109</sup>

But *Match Box Relief* has a place in Mellis's work not only in relation to its summation of or as a new attempt to think through the Carbis Bay phase ideas and transpose them into a different expressive configuration, but also a also a milestone in her work of the future. In terms of the moment it is also significant that Francis Davison, was in the 1950s and is now (2000) working on collages of torn paper in large scale and subdued colour harmonies. While the forms are angular and reminiscent of her geometrising during the Carbis Bay period, here the overall mundane object is being rendered at once as luxurious and mysterious. So just as she made her foray into abstraction while being married to Adrian, who painted consistently naturalistic paintings, this phase too can be seen as a statement of differentiating herself from her current husband and colleague artist. Mellis's *Relief* Series of the 1970s (figs. 64, 65) can be thought of as a *painting* of a collage and in this sense it is self referential specifically to her earlier work and generally to the nature of a work of art in modernism. The way the *Relief* is set on its ground is like but altogether different from the relation of image to its *passepartout* the painting is emphasised as an object, set preciously like a gem on a ring's bevel, but at the same time it retains the depiction's flatness. A game of real and illusionary relationship to space is being evoked here.

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<sup>109</sup> The different appraisal is evident whenever there is a discussion about Gabo's impact on say Wells and Lanyon or on Mellis and Barns-Graham.

*Match-Box Relief* remained for a while an isolated work whose lessons Mellis revisited only later, not before she went through various painterly experimentations. The early 1950s were years in which Mellis explored the relationship of tone, colour and paint as material. Experimenting in triad colour harmonies (*Still-life with Pears*, and *Dark Fish* both of 1953) and placing forms against a dark background led her to further experimentations with house paint which she used to explore their fluidity, resistance and the films and crusts they have created. "I wanted to push it till I got it right" is the only explanation she offered about these paintings. The 'it' and what it stands for remains open for the viewer's reading.

Increased interest in the paint textures brought about a series of paintings in which monochromatic tendency replaced her previous hedonistic use of pigments. In *Girl With White Flower*, 1954 (fig 51)<sup>110</sup> forms and colours are reduced to abstract tonality and to geometric forms relating to the frame. By this elision of either naturalism or the pleasure of pigments the viewer's attention is drawn to the paint application, its resistance to being placed or later even to being scraped off the canvas. It speaks of the artificiality of painting, of it being conceptualised and made by the artist. *Lighthouse Blue*, 1955 (fig 52)<sup>111</sup> follows textual experiment but by exploring a different quality of paint viscosity, it is the filmic dense surfaces that the household paint attains with which she creates large colliding or superimposed semi-geometrical shapes. *Kitchen Table II*, c. 1956 (fig 53)<sup>112</sup> shows an array of buckets, pots, bottles and casseroles, which are arranged in the same two perspective devices as that of the *Regents Park* painting, but the pots and containers are piled up on the painting's surface as if they serve an excuse for different textures, impasto, palette knife application and scraping of varying degrees. The colour harmony is subdued to blues and browns punctuated by patches of white and black lines, curves circles and

<sup>110</sup> *Retrospective* (1997) no. 6.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* No. 7.

<sup>112</sup> *Illus.* p. 26 in 2001 retrospective.

uprights. A similar two-way and superimposed perspective on a flat surface also appears in *Checked Table*, 1957 (fig 54). It is painted in an even starker range of black, white and grey, and the geometry is given by and obeyed by the checked table, with its superimposed bird's-eye view of the table and a level-view depiction of the glass top, bottles and goblet. This time the paint is fluid, and runny, and against the rigidity of the composition is the only animated element in the depiction. This group of paintings and the use of household paint in particular gave Mellis a sense of freedom, possibly because of its non-precious association, and during this time she stopped painting in front of the subject, with the exception of *Droopy Flowers*, 1957 (fig 55) which she initially painted because of their "good shape", and subsequently joined them with the geometrising theme of the *Girl with White Flowers* of 1954 (fig 51) with the still life and colour harmonies and texture of *Kitchen Table* of 1956, and combined them all in *Blind Woman* of 1957.<sup>113</sup>

The sequence and causal evolution of her practice and explorations that I have outlined in a somewhat exaggerated and selective way is symptomatic and typical of the way in which Mellis's work progresses with new experimentations, punctuated with revisiting of old themes, medium and compositions. The title of *Blind Woman* states her interest in ways of seeing, in her quest for what lies between sight and representation even to the degree in which she places a fictive, but highly indexical, blind person in front of a highly textured still life, that contains not only tactile but also scent in the depiction of flowers that lean towards and replace the woman's eye.

This notion of lack of space, visually- as in the flat representation, biologically- in the depiction of the blind woman, and the contact of flower/eye socket, was in fact a collapse of space in her oil paintings. During the same period, and concurrently with the evolution of the flat space, Mellis also worked on her envelope drawings which express a totally

<sup>113</sup> Illust. P 31 in 2001 retrospective.

different sense of space. Round about 1956 (fig 56)<sup>114</sup> she drew her theme of wilted flowers on the back of an envelope she just happened to have at hand.<sup>115</sup> The full meaning of that drawing was not recognised by her, though on several 'cleansing' and throwing away of unwanted drawings she resisted destroying this one. Only in 1987, nearly thirty years later, the expressive and symbolic meaning of the combination of a pastel drawing on a chance shaped envelope was fully understood by her (fig 56a).<sup>116</sup>

In 1959-60 Mellis was taken on by Waddington and the contract entailed her commitment to provide the Gallery with 12 paintings every two months.<sup>117</sup> The precise sequence and at times even the meaning and aims of the paintings then are not so clear in her mind, probably because of the fast and furious pace she had to produce them in.<sup>118</sup> By that time Mellis developed a particular love not only of household paints but of the equally humble Essex board as a support for her paintings. She liked its texture and would often even use it unprimed and either leave parts of it unpainted or scrape off paint to reveal it as another pigment. In *Ships in the Night*, 1960 (fig 57) as well as in other paintings from 1957 she used red underpaint that she then allowed to be seen either through by scraping or by leaving it exposed, and painting with black over it.

Annely Judas, who was running the Hanover Gallery, took Mellis on in 1964<sup>119</sup> and insisted that Mellis give up painting on Essex board. With her return to canvas she also gave up household paints and painted either large "origami-like abstractions" or small relief

<sup>114</sup> David Batchelor gives this date in the 2001 catalogue p.37, but in my interview in 1997 she told me that it was drawn in 1977 or thereabouts.

<sup>115</sup> Retrospective (2001) p 36.

<sup>116</sup> Interestingly it happened when she again went through her drawings with intent to destroy those that she didn't like and the meaning then came fully to her. What might be read into this is that at the time, that is in the 1950s, her experimentations with the many possible spatial expressions was not as yet fully formed in her mind in that particular way of abridging the daily activities and the artistic practice.

<sup>117</sup> Of the hard work of that time she commented, "I worked like a nigger." Interview in the retrospective exhibition 23.7.97.

<sup>118</sup> Although in her 85<sup>th</sup> year her memory was razor sharp then about all the other details. She did admit though that some of the dates of the other paintings in the exhibition were inaccurate, as there was such a rush in putting it together that she did not have time to reflect precisely on dates and at times dated paintings in relative terms to her professional or personal events.

<sup>119</sup> After she was "kicked out of Waddington", why she did not explain.



canvases, in which interlocking geometrical shapes of no more than three layers were set as three-dimensional objects and raised from a flat ground (figs. 64, 65).—The large hard edge geometrical abstractions in saturated colours, often in triad colour harmonies, echo on one hand an affinity with the new British frivolous and joyful expression that indicate awareness of both the graphic aesthetics of some trends within Pop Art and the visual games of Op. But at the same time they are also a long-term memory or perhaps homage to her oriental birthplace and to some fragility and sensibility that she relates to in an indirect, implicit way.

The small reliefs that were made out of canvas of complex geometrical interlocking shapes were a return to the painting as an object that is projected into space and have about them a synthetic quality in so far that the parts are being brought together, to make one overall shape, that consists of many particles. These elaborate structures gave way in 1977 to wooden structures that have become her last and most comprehensive art, the driftwood constructions.

In making these driftwood works she repositioned herself as a constructivist (figs. 58-62). She takes on the meaning from Gabo in the sense that she understands the emphasis of construction to be in the process of making. Like Gabo many years earlier she avoids the 'established' materials of art, but unlike him does not seek these in the new modernist, scientific materials, but rather in driftwood, a material that is natural. Driftwood may be compared to a found object, but she is much more interested in its condition, as a found object that the sea has deposited on the shores after it has worked on the marine artefact it used to be. Driftwood is deposited on the land with traces of its cyclical different 'existences' as a living breathing tree, after being cut, shaped transformed for human use and its surface changed to be covered by paint, only to be broken, discarded and mulled by the forces of the sea movement, which eventually also deposited it. A true many layered

palimpsest, which bares all the traces but can reveal only the sketchiest of its cycles.<sup>120</sup> Compared to canvas, or even board, driftwood is even more irreverent to the hierarchies of traditional art materials as well as to traditional practices. It can be considered in relation to its popularity of the 1970s<sup>121</sup> or even in the context of Greenbergian formalism, but it can be viewed differently when considered within Bernard Smith's concept of the *formalesque*.<sup>122</sup> In this analytical framing the tensions between rhetoric and practice emerge more clearly. These tensions arise from the rupture in the almost anthropological assessment of work according to the Mellis (and Barns-Graham) generations, age-set community. A dislocation between practice and 'age-set identification' occurred at both ends of Mellis's and Barns-Graham's professional life; during Mellis's Carbis Bay years as well as in her mature, old age practice. In the former her age difference and early stage of professionalism brought about her exclusion from the 'Older Generation' in the mainstream assessment, and positioned her on a par with the male disciples, who indeed were closer to her age, but professionally still amateurs and beginners compared with her. While they have all matured into individual artists, according to the dominant narrative, Mellis was constantly positioned in that category of 'chaperoned evaluation'. In a similar way the evaluation of Mellis' old-age work remains within the critical framework of modernism, a static appraisal that ignores personal and cultural changes that any artist or individual inevitably undergoes during thirty years of maturity and active creativity. Despite the rise of various postmodern sensibilities, of which one of the hall marks is a new personal interaction between 'nature' and the artist as an experiencing 'person' (rather than mind and/or hands), Mellis's work, by and large, has been left out from this discourse.<sup>123</sup> By contrast, Richard Long's use of driftwood as

<sup>120</sup> David Batchelor defines Mellis's envelope paintings and constructions as palimpsest. I wrote the analysis of her work and gave a paper on the subject in the same vein in Edinburgh AAH conference April 2000.

<sup>121</sup> During the late 1960s and early 1970s it was a popular decorative element that many homes contained. In a sense it used to be a fad belonging to the hippy age, and to a democratising interior creativity into irregular chance shapes.

<sup>122</sup> A term that Bernard Smith (1998) has coined in a critical distancing from the support position to an analytical one in his *Modernism's History*, pp 8,9,53.

<sup>123</sup> I am writing this despite the fact that Mellis's 2001 retrospective catalogue included the beginnings of this analysis, especially in David Batchelor's short article on the meaning of her envelope drawings, and the

well as Andy Goldsworthy's work attracts ample and rich postmodern and critical theorist articulations.<sup>124</sup>

Mellis's last phase work, constructions of driftwood, as she calls them, is significant to my argument for several reasons: first and foremost it is a manifestation of her artistic maturity and a powerful expression of the total sum to date of her personal and artistic engagement. In it the various trajectories, of her life-long association with the sea, with colour, with spatial expression, the pulling of figurative and abstraction, and her irreverence and disdain for boundaries and constraints all come together to voice her particular subjectivity. For me, having experienced her sense of fun<sup>125</sup> and determined energy<sup>126</sup>, they also represent a defiant spirit, not willing to give-in to old age perceived or real vulnerabilities.

But most important for my attempt for an intervention into the 'St Ives' canonised version is the question, what is the relationship between these driftwood constructions and Mellis's Carbis Bay years? First and foremost in my mind is the use of simple, non-noble materials, which in the 40s could have been an outcome of wartime shortage,<sup>127</sup> but has since become a personal choice and an expression of her irreverence towards hierarchies and authority.<sup>128</sup> Her sensibility to colours, which begun to express itself at ECA, is combined in the constructions with the ideas of art and its spatial existence that she encountered during her

questioning of why she had been ignored by critics by Damian Hirst. See D. Batchelor 'The Envelope Drawings' pp. 37-39, and D. Hirst 'Where the Land Meets the Sea' pp.3-5. in *Margaret Mellis* (2001).

<sup>124</sup> For instance See Herman Rapaport (1994) 'Brushed Oath, Slate Line, Stone Circle: On Martin Heidegger, Richard Long, and Jacques Derrida' in Peter Brunette and David Wills (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts Art, Media, Architecture*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp 151-167.

<sup>125</sup> On our last meeting in London 1999, she still was dancing in Southwold local ballet and tap classes as well as going to clubs to dance with her agent Kapil Jariwala and his partner.

<sup>126</sup> Margaret used to swim every morning in the North Sea, and during my visits also insisted that I join her, on one occasion she had to pull me out of the freezing water. I also saw her putting her constructions together with enormous screws, which are more difficult than hammering the pieces together with nails. I have also witnessed her determination when after reconsidering a construction, a young neighbour could not help her in unscrewing the pieces, and she proceeded to do it by sheer force of determination. On the same occasion I also saw her dislodging *Leaning*, 1997 (216 x 47 x 9 cms) (that we then have decided to name 'Take off') that got wedged in her third floor studio. She even intended to carry it down the stairs single-handed.

<sup>127</sup> Though Adrian Stokes continued to paint, and this indicates that there was access even if limited to traditional materials.

<sup>128</sup> Margaret was a staunch campaigner and in particular a supporter of the anti-Sizewell Nuclear campaign. Sizewell was located across the bay in which she swims every morning. We used to joke that she probably glows at night.

Carbis Bay years. These are still with her. She explicitly locates her work in relation to two key two concepts: Stoke's aesthetic notion of 'Carving' and Gabo's 'Constructions', but her own interpretation and use of them is, divergent from their authors' orthodoxies.<sup>129</sup> For Mellis' practice carving is that particular quality that used colours and forms to render a work as projecting into real experiential space, both literally and expressively. Construction in Mellis's use stands for the process and the making of the work, it is a commitment to the single work and a continuum of a way of life. This interpretative trend, of making a concept one's own, is also manifested in the way she has both appropriated Gabo's explorations with space, and made these her own. No modern materials or scientific alluding forms for Mellis: the organic, cyclic qualities of the materials and the traces with which they appear speak of her own Scottish, feminine, identity, with self-identification of a distant, oriental place of birth. The sea is as much a force and presence in her driftwood constructions as is the organic past of the tree, turned into an inanimate building material, reshaped by the sea's forces and deposited as a gift (literally) on her doorstep and overflowing in her studio (fig 62). Space in these constructions is geographical, temporal, and cyclic as much as imaginary. It is at one and the same time an index of her sense of her own life cyclic patterns and a return to live on the shores of the same North Sea in which she spent her childhood.<sup>130</sup> It is significant that she begun making Driftwood constructions in 1978, two years after moving to Southwold, Suffolk. But in terms of the many aspects contained in the driftwood constructions there is not so much the found object as the found colour. In a similar manner to the way in which Matisse in his old age cut into colour, for Mellis, colour,

<sup>129</sup> For the reading of Carving see Alex Potts (1996), in Thistlewood, David (ed) *Barbara Hepworth Reconsidered*. Critical Forum Series, Vol. 3. Liverpool University Press and Tate Gallery Liverpool. For the many changes of the meaning of Construction and Constructivism as well as the particular use that Gabo had in the West see Stephen Bann (ed) (1974) 'Introduction' pp xxv-xlix and 'From Circle – International Survey of Constructive Art' pp 202-220, in *The Tradition of Constructivism*. Also in Hammer and Lodder (2000) 114-118, 240-241; Gabo's appropriation of the term 107, 116; Gabo's definition pp.99-100, 164-5. They stress the flexible nature of the term in relation to: Gabo's life and contexts; the English art scene; and conflicting understanding between Hepworth and Gabo. In that sense, the individuated understanding of constructive art and constructivism is not unique to Mellis, but shared by other 'St Ives' artists, not least for a short period Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth, and in a more sustained approach by John Wells, Peter Lanyon and Mellis.

<sup>130</sup> This connection was made by Mellis several times in our conversations.

has the quality of being both a palimpsest, revealing its mysterious past, and a purveyor of hedonistic pleasure that she expressed so powerfully in her early career and formative years. The hedonism of the colour relates both to the pigments and to their textures. [illustrate] For my own imaginative reading of these there is in them also a visualisation, a homage and reinterpretation of Adrian Stokes's book's content and title *Smooth and Rough*. The surfaces of her constructions are hedonistic evocation of Colour and Form, of Smooth and Rough. The hidden, personal messages of her work are something she plays with constantly. For instance the construction *F*, 1997 (fig 59) is for her an obvious reference to her husband Francis Davison. On more general level, her memory of names of people depends on her synaesthetic colours letters association. In this sense, her constructions are also an allusion to Adrian who was in her memory the first person who shared with her a passion for the expressive power of colours. It is also, to my mind, of significance that Stokes's *Smooth and Rough* is about their married life and home, about the birth of Telfer their son in Little Park Owles. Her driftwood constructions display physically the qualities of smoothness and roughness [illustrate the cover of 2001 *In the Night*, 1993]. The reason she gives for using driftwood is because of the wonderful smooth quality it has by being pickled for so long in seawater.<sup>131</sup> The exposed bits of wood are indeed seen as smooth by contrast with the rough state of the layers of paint. Mellis's love of imaginary, symbolic gestures certainly invites the viewer to opens up for this kind of reading, of seeing in the driftwood construction a wide gamut of experiments, of debates, or possibly of inconclusive conversations.

Refusal to restrict her understanding to orthodoxies about space and time is also manifested in her 'objecthood' of her driftwood constructions, which defy not only logical strict notions of space in their archaeological sense but also their current fixed format as her creative constructions. Apart from the clear marine/sea association that they all share in content or medium they also all defy the academic, traditional notion of being framed. The notion of frame/lessness is repeatedly referred to in Mellis's driftwood constructions. *Pandora's Box*

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<sup>131</sup> Interview 20.10.67.

is an aggressive eruption out of the boundaries of the red box. *After the Fire*, 1996 (fig 60) is clearly a precarious, vulnerable frame, its lintel delicately poised, and can be read as either being seen from inside or from outside. Mellis's repeated concern with frames and their destruction or bursting open relates to her continuous exploration of space. It is as if she continued in her art an adventure with her father and siblings, about looking directly into the eye of the storm, or even some unfinished conversations with Adrian, who dedicated to her *Inside Out: An essay in the Psychology and Aesthetic Appeal of Space*, first published in 1947, a year after their separation. Could *Pandora's Box* or *After the Fire's* angry and elegiac expressions be read as a dream-like conversation, an assessment of feelings, of past memories coming to haunt her, and she responding in collapsing the now with the then and the 'what if'. *Through the Window*, 1990 (56 x 44 x 3.5 cms)<sup>132</sup> defies any notion of a possible clear view, the frame is only half existent, and the view can be read as either a flat depiction of illusionary space or its opposite, namely a categorical and complete negation of any possible clear view. In other words, the window is blocked.<sup>133</sup> Initially Mellis did not give the driftwood construction titles but only numbers, as in *Number 35*, 1983 (fig 61).<sup>134</sup> She dislikes giving titles to her works because in most instances she does not have an idea what the construction will be about and only lets it suggest a title after she completed making it to her satisfaction. She realised that she had to give them titles only when she could not remember their sequel numbers. Giving titles she considers a deterrent from a real unmediated visual engagement with the work, since viewers tend to interpret the work through titles and apply to them greater meaning than she had intended. And yet, despite Margaret's reticence in attributing to the titles too much guidance in terms of the meaning of the work, her articulation about the immediacy of

<sup>132</sup> Illustrated p 49 in Retrospective (2001)

<sup>133</sup> It therefore becomes a visual pun on the Albertian use of the window as a metaphor for the surface of the painting. It is interesting in relation to frames that one of the points of conflict she had with Waddington Gallery, after which she left them, was about the question of the kinds of frame. The gallery wanted to frame her work in gold and silver, then fashionable thin frames as they sold better. She felt that the frames distracted and interfered with the mood she wanted to express in her work.

<sup>134</sup> Illus. No. 12 in retrospective (97)

making driftwood constructions begs to read the titles as opening up possible readings. She has long since relinquished her college training of making sketches, because she is a firm believer that sketches are the most immediate and therefore the most powerful and direct expression of artistic intention and insight. Creatively, she considers the greatest advantage in working with driftwood is that the finished construction is both the sketch and the finished work at one and the same time. This ethos of direct expression of intention points to a need for reading of these intentions, whether they were conscious or unintentional.

It would be simplistic to read into this love of spontaneity a residue of her Carbis Bay years, and of being subjected to Ben Nicholson's encouragement to work in such a way. But a comparison with Barns-Graham, who works meticulously and carefully in order to obtain an illusion of spontaneity and immediacy, proves that such causality would be wrong. What needs to be taken into consideration is a total sum of patterns of interest and cycles of experimentation together with expressive and temperamental predilections. Whoever visits Mellis's home knows that it is first and foremost a studio, with little space allocated for cooking, eating and sleeping in. Domestic order cannot be found anywhere, not because she doesn't like it orderly, but because it takes a lot of time to obtain and then she can never keep it. During the years she and Francis lived inland, in Seylham, they regularly visited Southwold, because she found that bathing in the nearby river was never as invigorating as the sea. She loves the surprises and unpredictable character of the sea, and it was for that reason that she wanted to move nearer to it. For Francis living so close to the sea was a disturbance; he found the chaotic element of it threatening, unlike Margaret who loves it for that reason. That elemental aspect of fluidity, of chance without boundaries is part of Mellis temperament and is expressed in her driftwood constructions. A similar kind of resistance to setting strict parameters for her artistic evolution, also informs her description of the different phases of her artistic output. She delineates a sequence and stresses time and again that it is a gradual and cyclic progression, of revisiting and re-engagements with

experiments that she might have done in earlier periods and returned to them after a long time in which they were left-dormant.

The only group of works that were repetitive, and to a great extent planned and pre-prepared, are the works belonging to the *Saints Series*, such as *Resurrection*, 1985 (figs. 66a&b) and *Garden of Eden*, 1988 (fig 67), a series she began after the death of Francis.<sup>135</sup>

The notion of afterlife already existed in Mellis's paintings and in her drawings of dead flowers, whose shape she had found pleasing and intriguing. But with the passing away of Francis, she embarked on the *Saints Series* for both metaphysical and romantic reasons. Both their names – Margaret and Francis - she explained are Saints' names and the work initially reunited them in her work and in its religious titles.<sup>136</sup> The basic form which she used to replicate and use in this series is an old discarded butter patting tool that found on one of her walks. It looked to her like a shadow of a figure and she replicated that same shape and used it repeatedly in the Saints Series. Her Scottish childhood upbringing in a religious household has returned to haunt her imagination, as well as her notion of Scottish, Celtic identity that she stresses when she discusses the series. She finds the positive negative aspect of cutting the forms out as particularly suitable for that work, as is so clearly arranged in *Garden of Eden*, 1988 (fig 67). This series is the only one in which she made a pre-planned intervention with the construction.<sup>137</sup> That this series is her own farewell to and meditation on a quantitatively different notion of space is made visible by the hollowed out shapes and outlines of the absent figure, against which solid outlines are being ordered as if in a theatrical staging of the after life, or perhaps pre-life, a fantasy of eternal unity. When she talks about this series, she quotes biblical passages, or even recites rhythmically nursery rhymes about angels and protection.

<sup>135</sup> She found his death particularly traumatic, for the loneliness and loss of companionship and also for the strange coincidence that the cause of Adrian's death and Francis were identical. Both died from a brain haemorrhage.

<sup>136</sup> Other titles of the series are: *Temptation*, *The three Maries*, and more such of religious iconography.

<sup>137</sup> With all the rest of the driftwood she prefers to use the colours with which the wood has been found, and rarely adds small touch or two of paint to balance the colour harmony.



Looking at the physical, and visual qualities of her driftwood constructions and at the content of her envelope drawings, dead flowers, blind girl and in particular the theme of death and resurrection of her saints series, it can be claimed that Mellis did make art in which the *Smooth and Rough* of art making, of the presence of art and its meaning are all there combined.

Mellis physically was for a short but crucial time in Carbis Bay, a time in which she was professionally and educationally proficient, but still was defining her specific voice in terms of fine tuning what her art was about. Ben and Gabo did indeed encourage her to explore the possibilities of abstraction. The terminology she uses to discuss and define her art is appropriated from Adrian, Gabo and Ben but not in a pure replication of their understandings. But contrary to the reductive presentation of her art as a brief moment of influence, being a disciple is far from the reality of her work and artistic intention. Just as Lanyon has made the quest of space his own in expressing his own masculinity and Cornish nationalism, so did Mellis make the concepts of abstraction, construction and space her own from her personal, feminine perspective. She rendered these as her own subjective, independent voice, and doing so despite the fact that relationships featured highly in her personal daily life. And yet, to what extent the authority of the masculine view determined/s hers remains an open question. From the way I see it, with her love of chaos, of risk, of fun, and of physical activity, she guarded her freedom and independence. The strategic manner in which she managed to eschew domestic chores and give preference for her artistic work could also be her strategic consideration in expressing respect for masculine terminology.

## Chapter 4

### W. Barns-Graham: 'The Stars were too near to the Moon'<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

If commitment to living and working in St Ives is a determinant for the inclusion in the 'modern movement', as claimed in the 1985 catalogue and in justifying the omission of Winifred Nicholson, then Wilhelmina Barns-Graham ought to be at the head of the list. She arrived at St Ives in March 1940, on a postgraduate travelling studentship<sup>2</sup> from Edinburgh College of Art; and is living and working there 62 years on. The choice of St Ives as a destination was made because the war and her chest illness compounded by the necessity to use her travelling scholarship or else it would have been annulled. As Europe as a destination was out of the question, St Ives was proposed by Herbert Wellington for several reasons: one of her tutors had known Ben Nicholson and suggested she would be interested in his art, in addition the mild climate of St Ives offered the best available healing conditions for her within the UK, and there was the added advantage for her of getting away from the confines of a strict autocratic family mores. The presence of Peggy Mellis,<sup>3</sup> her student-year's friend and then the wife of Adrian Stokes, in nearby Carbis Bay, offered an additional bonus and made for an easy transition from Scotland to Cornwall. After a short stay at Little Park Owles Wilhelmina found accommodation and settled in St Ives where she has lived ever since, other than one year in 1956-7 - when she joined her husband in Leeds - and between 1961-63<sup>4</sup> - after her marriage break up she lived continuously in St Ives. Thus, St

<sup>1</sup> It was the first thing the guard said to Wilhelmina Barns-Graham as she alighted on the platform of St Ives Station in March 1940. Also quoted in Nedira Yakir (1997) Introduction to Wilhelmina Barns-Graham New Painting Exhibition, St Ives, New Millennium Gallery, 30 August- 12 October.

<sup>2</sup> Which she won in 1937 and that was the last year she could take it up.

<sup>3</sup> As Margaret has been known to her student friends. Wilhelmina herself is universally called Willie. I discuss the meaning of names in the disadvantaging structures section of my Conclusions.

<sup>4</sup> During which years she was mainly based in London, painted and was involved in the art world there. She showed regularly with Waddington and sold her work through his gallery.

Ives has been her base both as an adopted home and most importantly as her studio for well over half a century.

In terms of her professional commitment come what may, she painted every day and is still keeping to that routine, resulting in an extraordinary output both in terms of sheer output and in her expressive diversity,<sup>5</sup> she exhibited on equal footing with SISA,<sup>6</sup> Newlyn Art Society, the Crypt Group and PSAC, as well as in London and abroad (Appendices 23-26 fig 126). Her paintings were bought by collectors in Scotland, Cornwall and London since the late 1930s as well as by institutions such as The Arts Council after the Second World War and has a loyal and enthusiastic following of collectors.<sup>7</sup> Barnes-Graham's art also earned the respect of artists from three consecutive generations of British modernism: Borlase Smart, Ben Nicholson (Appendix 27) and Roger Hilton, as well as included in the seminal *Dictionary of Abstract Painting* compiled in France by Michel Seuphor, 1957.<sup>8</sup> In her native Scotland official recognition of her artistic merit came early, already as a postgraduate student and increased with the years despite her electing to make St Ives in Cornwall her permanent base. English official recognition was slower and relatively late to come and happened only recently, as she was nearing the ripe age of 90. In November 1999, through to 2000 the Tate St Ives staged a solo exhibition *The Enduring Image*,<sup>9</sup> she was honoured by being conferred a CBE,<sup>10</sup> and on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday a celebratory lunch was organised in honour of her at the Tate in London. And yet, she still is neglected in terms of art historical analysis.<sup>11</sup> So why is it that her official, museal recognition was so late in

<sup>5</sup> There is not as yet a comprehensive catalogue of her work.

<sup>6</sup> Which she joined in 1942.

<sup>7</sup> The Tate Gallery had till recently only paintings being bequeathed to them, but in 1999, prior to her solo exhibition in the Tate St Ives, they purchased and she donated some paintings so that now there are Barnes-Graham's in their collection (Appendix 26).

<sup>8</sup> Seuphor, Michel (1958, (1957)) *A Dictionary of Abstract Painting*, London, Methuen.

<sup>9</sup> On which occasion they bought for the first time one of her paintings, and she gifted four others of their choice (see Appendix 26).

<sup>10</sup> In the Honours' List of 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Though Lynn Green (2001) *W. Barnes-Graham, A studio Life*, London, Lund Humphries, is the first overview of her life and chronology of her art it is still more a book of compilation than of analysis. It was

coming?<sup>12</sup> Part of the answer to the question lies with the way she was positioned in the 1985 exhibition, where it is claimed that she belonged to the post-war phase as part of the young modernists group, who exhibited in the crypt of the recently deconsecrated Mariner Church (1946-48). This 1985 classification - based on age grouping - is neither of artistic nor of historical accuracy. It serves, above all, to privilege the older generation, in particular representing Ben Nicholson as the leader and model for imitation in implying that he was the 'old modern' after whom they all fashioned themselves, and secondly, to position the young men artists, in an heroic manner where the artistic kudos of their war efforts was being transposed onto what was claimed to be their artistic avant-gardism. In the first section of this chapter I locate Barns-Graham within 'St Ives', that is, the local art world. In the second section I consider her expressive output by selecting some key issues that are intrinsic to her art. In this formula of dual relationship, I am informed by Bourdieu's analysis of the interrelatedness of creativity and networking, of agency and structure in the process of reputation positioning.

### Diversity ignored

Unlike Winifred Nicholson, who has been attributed a single signature style - of flower paintings - to the exclusion of her non-figurative paintings, Mellis and Barns-Graham are presented as practicing only a *single* meaningful creative phase in their lifetime. The principle of their evaluation is not about sustained career and professional achievements, but of a restrictive, singular expressive mode, that is being claimed as the only mode of importance in their art. Apart from the erasure of other works and expression this formula also implies a short-lived concentration or spontaneous formulation that has either not been sustained or not developed. In this restrictive formula, Barns-Graham's *Glaciers Series* stands as both an equivalent for and a variation on the example of Mellis's valued abstract

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commissioned by the trustees and enjoyed the cooperation of by Barns-Graham who also authorised it. This gives it its strength in terms of informative details and accuracy, but it has little analytical content.

<sup>12</sup> The Tate Gallery's first acquisition of her work was in late 1999, just prior to her solo exhibition in the Tate St Ives.

collages... Of Barns-Graham's three paintings in the catalogue two were illustrated: *Island Sheds*, *St Ives no. 1*, 1940 (fig 10)<sup>13</sup> and *Upper Glacier*, 1950 (fig 72)<sup>14</sup> were not considered as stages in her artistic path, but as illustration for and affirmation of the canonical stages of 'St Ives', in the way the painting are located to assert the impact of men artists, from the untutored primitive, to the most cosmopolitan modernist of them all; the claimed internalising, of Wallis (figs 69, 70) in her *Island Sheds*, 1940 and of Gabo in her *Glacier Series* of the 1950s. Her absence from sub-section X of the catalogue 'Post 1964' indicates even more emphatically the bias contained in the selection of her works despite her continuous and prolific output. At best, it is possible to assume that the lack of signature style in the work of both Mellis and Barns-Graham has presented an interpretative and evaluative difficulty. But this benefit-of-the-doubt assumption seems more questionable when comparing the rhetoric justificatory meanings ascribed to men artists who practised a wide variety of styles and expressive modes. For male artists' shift in affinities is read as an intellectual search, for women as an inability to find one's own voice. Stylistic or expressive inconsistencies are usually equated with formative or transition years when appraising male artists.<sup>15</sup> Diversity in the artwork of women modernists is seen as appropriation, lack of individuality, while a repetition of format, style or theme, are being appraised as poverty of ideas.<sup>16</sup>

Barns-Graham's diverse art practice stretches, from academic representational portraiture, cityscapes and interiors, to postimpressionist still life, landscapes, and to spectacular drawings *in situ*, as well as to a substantial abstract body of work of wide range of varying

<sup>13</sup> *St Ives* (1985) colour reproduced on p 72 (cat. no.39) & p 162.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. black and white reproduction, p 180 (cat.no.97) p 179.

<sup>15</sup> Mondrian's own term 'transition years' for the years 1908-11 has been accepted and repeated in the literature and it is a unity within diversity that is being argued by art historians. See Yve-Alain Bois et al (eds.) (1994) *Piet Mondrian*, Exhibition Catalogue for Haags Gemeente-museum, The Hague, Washington and New York, National Gallery of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, Milan, Leonardo Arte. For division of phases see Introduction; for 'Transition Years' see p 330.

<sup>16</sup> While current culture prevents such crude statements to be made in print or public, they are frequently being made orally. The very fact that women artists still do not attract scholarly attention indicates the persistence, even if tacit, of differential evaluation.

degrees of abstraction and strict non-figurative paintings. Within her major group of works, the abstract paintings, there is an equally wide range of stylistic and expressive modes: organic, geometric, spontaneous free brush, careful architectonic structures, rhythmic patterning, as well as images alluding to natural forces from the movement of the earth's tectonic plates, mysteries of water/ice, the power of waves, destructive and mysterious force of fire as well as a series of cosmic constellations. This variety and its cyclic tendency of emerging at different periods of her life, add to the difficulty of periodizing her oeuvre. This diversity and complex temporal distribution of practice renders a pattern that does not comply with the traditional art historical discourses. If her work were to be read merely as an expression of biographical events, it becomes illustrative of the anecdotal; if it charts encounters with modernisms it becomes a chronicle of cultural concerns. Neither of these interpretative models accommodates a reading of her art as either innovative, or as of individuated expressive qualities, that are the pre-requisites of autonomous modernism. My reading of Barns-Graham's art is of a practice indexical to the intrinsic conflict within modernism: that of the limited acceptance of women modernists, even if they are practising their avant-garde's modes of expression, let alone when they subvert modernist paradigms. In Barns-Graham's work the conflict resides, I argue, in her astute, deliberate and conscious internalisation of modernism, which is either employed for her personal musing, or at other times is at odds with her emotional expressive drive. In a reversal of the model that I have outlined in relation to Ben Nicholson, where the personal has been dismissed in the evaluation of his work, in Barns-Graham's case it is her intellectual input that has been ignored and the personal, anecdotal magnified.

### **Barns-Graham and the art world of 'St Ives'**

In terms of the chronological mapping of 'St Ives' Wilhelmina features in all the significant events that the 1985 catalogue has outlined. In this section my intervention locates W. Barns-Graham in these listed events: the Carbis Bay Phase; the incursion of the 'moderns'

into SISA; old (1944) and young- the Crypt (1946-48)<sup>17</sup>; PSAC (1949-); and the local festivities for The Festival of Britain (1951). During the war years Wilhelmina was both part of the social circle of the Carbis Bay, and yet not wholly a part of it. While mingling with the Carbis Bay Group was for her an amazing eye-opener, both on personal and artistic levels, she all the same kept somewhat of a distance from it by making St Ives her base, home and studio.<sup>18</sup> In St Ives she equally socialized with the Academic painters, joined both SISA and Newlyn Society of Art, of which she still is a member.

From the outset, her arrival in St Ives on March 1940, Barns-Graham was socially involved with the Carbis Bay Group, as well as with St Ives the town and its local art society SISA. As a graduate from ECA she was respected and accepted in both camps, and held a unique position of straddling the two distinct camps. She remembers that in Carbis Bay gatherings she was amazed at the new world of forms and colours that was not restricted to art making but spilled over to everyday life. In St Ives the academic artists, especially the influential Borlase Smart and Leonard Fuller,<sup>19</sup> welcomed her as a member of SISA for her accomplished drawings, in particular her portraiture, which had been her speciality at the time.<sup>20</sup> Her ability and commitment earned her not only the support of Borlase Smart to the extent that he let her use one of the Porthmeor Studios as early as 1940<sup>21</sup> he very early on arranged for her to have a studio at Porthmeor studios and also approached her to intercede

<sup>17</sup> Guido Morris (arrived at St Ives 1946), Sven Berlin (38-39 market garden at Little Park Owles; 42-45 serves at the Royal Artillery), Peter Lanyon (returned in 1945), Bryan Wynter (to St Ives 1945) and John Wells (leaves medicine at Isles of Scilly and settles in Newlyn, Forbes studio in 1945).

<sup>18</sup> Barns-Graham recalls how coming from a conventional and traditional background, where she was constantly told by her father that women ought to get married and produce a male issue, seeing the liberated life-style of people like Margaret Gardiner, who wore vibrant colours and chunky primitive jewellery seemed to Wilhelmina as a totally different world to the one she came from. In conversation 2.11.02 after she read parts of this thesis.

<sup>19</sup> To whose life classes Wilhelmina went regularly during the early 1940s, for these were the only opportunity to draw and paint from life. Wellington, however suggested she concentrates on landscape while she stayed in St Ives. Information phone conversation with Rowan James, 25.11.02.

<sup>20</sup> Information from the artist. It is possible to assume that Barns-Graham's choice of portraiture as a speciality at that time might be due to her father's insistence on her studying something useful.

<sup>21</sup> Ben Nicholson had to negotiate a studio from the Arts Council nine years later, in 1949, when the AC took over the guardianship and running of the Studios.

between himself and Ben Nicholson in inviting the latter to exhibit in St Ives.<sup>22</sup> The outcome of that introduction was that the Carbis Bay 'moderns' began to show in St Ives, either on open days shows, or with SISA from 1944 onwards. After 1945, with the successful acquisition of the deconsecrated Mariner's Church as SISA's exhibiting hall, the paintings of the Carbis Bay 'moderns' were hung together around the font, according to Wilhelmina's memories or 'behind the door' according to William Scott.<sup>23</sup> While during the war years Wilhelmina bridged between Carbis Bay and St Ives, after the war she became also an integral part of the 'young moderns' who grouped to have an exhibition at the Crypt the first that made them distinct from both the traditionalists of SISA, and separate from the paternal auspices of Ben and Barbara (fig 9). When in February 1949 the secession from SISA took place and a new Society was formed, W. Barns-Graham was a signatory to the founders members list (Appendix 28). As Douglas Hall has written, Wilhelmina always was in the right place at the right time.<sup>24</sup> If so, why has it taken so long for her to be recognized, and how can the incongruity of her self perception be explained, given her insistence that she was 'one of the boys' as well as that she has always been a 'lone wolf'?<sup>25</sup> The contradiction might reflect the marginal status that she feels that she has been given in both contexts.

While she had then, and still has now, the utmost respect and admiration for the work and examples of Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo, and in this sense recognises their seniority then, her position is altogether different in relation to returning 'boys'. She was of the same age group and naturally socialized with them, but on a professional level she was the only one with a diploma, other than Bryan Wynter, who was the only one to also have graduated

<sup>22</sup> Barns-Graham letter, dated 8.10.84, to David Brown recalling the events, is reproduced in its entirety in the 'Chronology' section of the 1985 catalogue, P 102. In 1944 Ben Nicholson and Miriam Israel exhibited in St Ives: Ben in Smart's Porthmeor studio on Show Day, 2 March, and in SISA's annual Spring Show. Gabo declined. It seems that Mellis and Stokes did not exhibit in St Ives.

<sup>23</sup> The documentary evidence of how much their work differed from that of SISA's members is conflicting. The titles of the works by Nicholson and Israel in 1944 indicate landscape and still life paintings. However, in 1941 the reviewer in *St Ives Times*, observed a dramatic contrast between the styles of Smart and Nicholson.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas Hall (1989) *W. Barns-Graham: Retrospective 1940-1989*, exhibition catalogue, Edinburgh, City Art Centre, 'Introduction'.

<sup>25</sup> Wilhelmina repeatedly uses both expressions.



from the Slade School 1938-40.<sup>26</sup> She was teased by the 'young-moderns' for being an exception and for having a diploma, and also had to tolerate the indignity of being positioned at the margin of the construction of the group's history. A photograph, (fig 9) taken in her studio, stands both for a proof as well as reveals the ambiguity of her position. It expresses the ambiguity contained in interpreting the position of a single woman amidst a group of men. Physically she is seen standing up at the centre of her studio, surrounded by the seated men and her paintings on the walls. But her being the only woman in a group of men inevitably signals difference. Just as her gender is an index of difference, so are her good, youthful looks, and the reading of her activity, namely serving tea. Thus despite being at the centre, and in her professional environment, what is *seen* is her domestic activity as a hostess. This stands in contrast to their inactivity, and their contemplative role (thinking). Historically speaking the photograph(s)<sup>27</sup> are not purely documentary since they are staged, but they disclose enough about the nature of the group to speak loud and clearly above the group's collective consent as to who belongs to the core group. The evidential importance of the photograph does not lie in when and who shot the image but in the fact that even a year after the first Crypt show, the group identified Wilhelmina as an integral member to be included without doubt in their group portrait. At the time the photograph was shot, others joined The Crypt group show, but only she is part of the group portrait.

In recent years the way in which Wilhelmina has been positioned as marginal to The Crypt has provoked her to forceful and adamant efforts to set the record right.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> After the war, Guido Morris and John Wells can be defined as intellectuals who ventured into art and printing as self-taught practitioners. A fierce masculine competition for the role of leadership determined the volatile relationship between Berlin and Lanyon, the latter having an edge due to his being a 'local boy', as well as being perceived as 'crown prince' of Nicholson and Hepworth's abstract legacy, that is until their relationship's explosive break-up.

<sup>27</sup> There are two slightly different photographs that were taken as part of a wide variety of other photographs taken by the Central Office of Information, 1946/7, that is, near enough to the date of the first Crypt show, although admittedly they are staged photograph and were taken after the event.

<sup>28</sup> For a detailed discussion about the controversy, see Chapter 1. Barns-Graham is particularly dismayed at the way she has been written out as an early member of the group by the biographers of Peter Lanyon, M. Garlake and C. Stephens. C. Stephens (2000) writes "For their second Exhibition, in 1947, they were joined by Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, showing slightly naïve views of St Ives and Penwith." p 83. This insistence of

The debate surrounding The Crypt pivots around two issues: its importance within the history of 'St Ives' and the position of Barnes-Graham within it, which is here the main concern. In other words: Was she a founder member of the Crypt? According to Barnes-Graham she left work to be included but either for reasons of misunderstanding or forgetfulness on the part of the 'boys' to fetch her work from her studio she was not included. In addition to the gendered aggressive self-positioning of the boys returning from the war, and women and society's over-compensating their wishes, during the immediate post war phase, there is also the additional issue of regionalism (which was at the time considered to be of lesser consequences but did establish a long-term pattern of her erasure from the Artwriting of 'St Ives') that is, of what is claimed to be Barnes-Graham's split loyalties, between St Ives and her native Scotland. It has to be stressed that similar split loyalties, or commitments by other male artists did not affect their appraisal in the same way. While, as the photograph indicates, at the time she enjoyed her male colleagues relative solidarity, later on, when the battles for reputations became fiercer, this solidarity waned to a degree of omission and disloyalty.<sup>29</sup>

### The Crypt

Since precious little detailed attention has been directed at The Crypt - its history, meaning at the time and subsequently in hindsight - I have looked at its historiography in an attempt to clarify whatever can be gleaned from documents, publications and counter-claims. Generally, the relevance of the Crypt to 'St Ives' has been largely overshadowed by the much greater prominence given in the academic and popular literature to the events leading to the foundation of, the formation and activities of PASC.

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ignoring her memories, and claims of the events, or indeed Borlase Smart's letters to her when she was in Scotland is a constant source of irritation to her. Information from communication with both the artist and Stephens September 1999.

<sup>29</sup> She repeatedly recalls one artist telling her outright that he will do anything to supersede her reputation for he needed to fend for his family, which at the time she took with respect and a degree of acceptance.

The undisputed facts are that between 1946-1949 there were three exhibitions of young moderns in the space of the crypt of the deconsecrated church of the Mariner in St Ives, and this activity has become known as The Crypt Group. Whenever The Crypt group is discussed with some degree of detail the core, or founder members listed are: Sven Berlin, Peter Lanyon, Guido Morris, John Wells and Bryan Winter.<sup>30</sup> In the emplotment of 'St Ives' the Crypt serves both as pivotal and marginal roles: in relation to the narrative that privileges the established individuals of Carbis Bay, it is relatively marginal event; if however, considered from the perspective of the significance of St Ives, it is the first, wholly separate exhibition of (young) moderns in St Ives within the auspices of a local art institute. In another sense, in the context to SISA, The Crypt shows were only a further, more explicit form of separating visibly the 'traditional' from the 'moderns'. This separation was a format established from the first art exhibition in The Mariners' Church, 1945, where the moderns were grouped as separate described ironically as 'behind the door'<sup>31</sup> or more positively as arranged 'around the font'.<sup>32</sup> So far, the issue of how did the Crypt come about, or indeed what exactly was its nature has been reliant on the self-promoting writings of Peter Lanyon and the evidence of catalogues designed and printed by Guido Morris. Both sources are published documents and their exponents are men, thus the logocentric double privileging of the word uttered by men has determined the narration that did not deem to need any further examination. Within this system, the oral claims of Wilhelmina Barnes-Graham do not make their way to the published authorized version.<sup>33</sup> The two documented times that I have come across in which Barnes-Graham discusses her part in the group either did make their way only in a *sotto voce* manner to the main body of text. A photograph of the group is

<sup>30</sup> *St Ives* (1985) pp 104-105, 179; M. Garlake (1998) p 29, and Christopher Stephens (2000) pp 82-83.

<sup>31</sup> As William Scott described it in a humorous but pejorative term, TAV 8613, 436.

<sup>32</sup> As Wilhelmina Barnes-Graham describes it, seeing in the separation a positive, cohesive arrangement, personal communications.

<sup>33</sup> In *St Ives* (1985) the Crypt is mentioned in David Brown's 'Chronology' section, in the 'biographical notes' as well as getting a mention in the listing of a string of activities by the post-war younger generation in the sub-section IV, p 179.

included in David Lewis's article (fig 9)<sup>34</sup> and in the 'Catalogue' section where David Brown reports that the painting *Island Sheds, St Ives No. I*, 1940, (fig 10) "together with versions II and III were exhibited in the Second Crypt exhibition in 1947".<sup>35</sup> A tacit tag of dispute is played out for those in the know about the debate; the photograph is being presented, as evidence for her claim, the emphasis on her participation in the Second exhibition – is a tacit proof of her not being a founder member.

Wilhelmina on her part insists that The Crypt was of twofold importance: it was the first unified 'modern' group to organise themselves into an exhibiting body in St Ives and this subsequently offered a meagre but potent prototype for PASC,<sup>36</sup> the second significance was that it was the first and only instance in which the 'young moderns' exhibited without Ben and Barbara. All the published texts that discuss the Crypt claim that it was Peter Lanyon's brainchild, except for Denys Val Baker who credits Borlase Smart with the idea and support.<sup>37</sup> Lynne Green, Barns-Graham's biographer, states that Peter Lanyon Archive supports the version that claims that Barns-Graham was not there at the beginning.<sup>38</sup> My search in the same archive came up with evidence that could substantiate her claims. There are two draft letters written by Peter Lanyon, the first when he was made the press officer of PSAC and in this capacity was asked to write letters to prominent local individuals explaining why the group seceded from SISA. The second letter referring to the Crypt is after his resignation from PSAC, May 1950, when he embarked on an intensive campaign of letter writing, especially to the *St Ives Times* (SIT).<sup>39</sup> In both versions there is an overall tone of an attempt to set the record straight, a self-glorification and an emphasis on the importance of the Crypt, in a manner that implies that this was perhaps not a universally

<sup>34</sup> *St Ives* (1985) p 26.

<sup>35</sup> See *St Ives* (1985) comments in catalogue no. 39, p 162, dated 3.11.84.

<sup>36</sup> A view that ignores Ben Nicholson past pattern of taking over art societies and his early declared intentions, while still living in Carbis Bay, according to Mellis.

<sup>37</sup> Lynne Green (2001) is the only one who mentions both versions, but curiously then comes to a conclusion determined by an interview with Sven Berlin shortly before his death. It is surprising that she accepts his version rather than that of Barns-Graham, pp 88-92.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* pp 89-90.

<sup>39</sup> Both letters and the information that follows are from Peter Lanyon Archive (PLA) kept by Sheila Lanyon, Newlyn.

recognised fact.—But there are obviously differences between the two versions. In the first, dated: “March? 1949” (sic) he writes:

When I returned to St. Ives in 1946 (May), I had a talk with Smart and met Sven Berlin for the first time. Also John Wells. *Smart suggested that we should open up the Crypt of the New Gallery and start a group show.* (My emphasis)<sup>40</sup>

Thus the earliest statement about whose idea it was, concurred with that made ten years later by Val Baker and insisted on by Wilhelmina. As for the question who the group included Lanyon writes:

Those who were showing in the Castle Inn then founded a vague sort of group with Guido Morris, the printer. This was, of course, all supported by Smart and was in fact one of his greatest interests because he saw in it a future for the society.

By this definition, that is the artists who exhibited in the Castle Inn, W. Barns-Graham belongs to the group. Later on in the same letter he gives a brief description of his late arrival at St Ives and joining the group of young moderns Wynter, Berlin and Wells, he fails to add Barns-Graham, though she was by then part of the group:

As to the ‘moderns’ themselves, I was in a difficult position, being the only local inhabitant but, at the same time, a new addition to the younger group of Berlin, Wells and Wynter.

The absence of Barns-Graham from the list of the already existing group in St Ives of the moderns is a naturalised misogyny as indeed is the listing of her as if in an afterthought when he writes about the 1948 Crypt exhibition:

The 1948 Crypt Show was a bold affair. We added David Haughton, Kit Barker, Patrick Heron and Adrian Ryan to the founder members, plus W. Barns Graham, who joined us in 1947.

It appears that this statement rather than anything else he wrote in his letters determined what the repeated claim was to become. In respect of Barns-Graham it locates her as if she did not exhibit at the Castle Inn, had not been a distant part of the Carbis Bay group, or a member of SISA since 1942. As for other aspects it is here for the first time that the term ‘founder members’ appears in relation to the Crypt, while the Crypt is not named as a group but as ‘Crypt Show’.

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<sup>40</sup> PLA, Newlyn.

Discrepancies between the real events and their eventual narration also exist in general terms relating to the Crypt, mainly around the issues of the group's self-perception, and the notion of 'founder members'. In an over-determined narration Garlake writes that with the dissolution of Carbis Bay modernist centre "The younger artists were about to be thrown back on their own resources. Their immediate response was to form an exhibiting group. Lanyon, Wells, Sven Berlin, Bryan Wynter and the printer, Guido Morris held their first joint exhibition in September 1946. They called themselves the Crypt Group..."<sup>41</sup> This simplified heroic plotting of events is at variance with the versions outlined by Peter Lanyon's 1949 version, Val Baker's and Barns-Graham's. Only the autocratic, but extremely liberal, Borlase Smart had the authority to initiate and promote such a decision.<sup>42</sup> After all, the Crypt was a part of the New Gallery and part of SISA. Following from that, it appears that using the term 'founder members' in relation to the Crypt is a misnomer, since they exhibited as a sub-group *within* SISA. Furthermore, the group had neither a manifesto, nor common aims or style. The wording of Lanyon in 1949 is 'the Crypt Show', which indicates how vague the group configuration was, based on sympathies for modernism, and age group. It is probable that in 1949 during the secession from SISA, avantgardist terminology was so prevalent that Lanyon naturalized the language and used it in his summation of the events of the Crypt, and applied it seamlessly, but inaccurately the term 'founder members' for the Crypt, for the first time. Subsequently, his version was uncritically repeated by all the publications, as well as in the 1985 catalogue, ignoring, any alternative versions of the events. Whatever misnomer and inaccurate historicism that became entrenched in relation to the Crypt, there is no denying the contribution and status that Barns-Graham had within it.

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<sup>41</sup> M. Garlake (1998) p 29.

<sup>42</sup> The repeated claims that overstate Peter Lanyon's initiative, echo his self-positioning since 1949. Reading his correspondence at the time, especially his letters from Italy, he expressed surprise at the contact between Smart and Nicholson after hearing about the Carbis Group showing with SISA. He even intimated to his sister, his hopes that this would mean that even he could exhibit with SISA. These statements indicate that at the time he was an aspiring and promising young artist. Similar traits of inexperience and lack of authority was manifested in his aborted attempt to organise a Crypt exhibition in London, Lefevre Gallery or Hanover Gallery (see Stephens (2000) p 83). Even later in his official roles within PSAC the minutes are clear documentation that his actions had always to be agreed on and ratified.

That Barns-Graham was valued amongst the 'younger generation' is explicitly manifested by the high percentage of her works included in the Crypt's second exhibition, August 1947. Out of a total of 100 exhibits (by Barns-Graham, Berlin, Lanyon Wells and Morris) she exhibited 28, which represents a high profile indicating her prolific output and unquestioned acceptance as an equal by the group.<sup>43</sup> She also had local appreciative support judging from the review that described her contribution as "most interesting recent work conveyed with a naïve charm of naturalism which provided the right contrast to the other exhibitors."<sup>44</sup> 54 years later, C. Stephens uses similar, uncritical terms to describe her work: "Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, showing slightly naïve views of St Ives and Penwith."<sup>45</sup> As with Mary Jewels description the term 'naïve' is utilised as a loaded gendered term, that implies lack of professional control. Contrary to this implication I argue that Barns-Graham's work of the time indicates a sophisticated exploration of what possibilities lay within primitivizing experimentations.

### **Barns-Graham and Primitivism**

A comparison between her work done prior to her arrival in St Ives and her early representation makes it obvious that her art was accomplished, professional and indicative of cosmopolitan, especially French modernism. The degree of her deliberate primitivizing trend emerges when comparing *St Ives Harbour*, 1940, ()<sup>46</sup> painted shortly after arrival at St Ives with the later *Snow [Scene], St Ives*, 1947 (fig 73) which was one of the 28 works shown on the second Crypt show. *St Ives Harbour* is painted with assurance of touch and composition; its fluency and colour harmonies evoke the airiness of atmosphere of Raul Dufy. The *Snow [Scene], St Ives*, painted during the 1947 snow storm, is composed with severe geometric blocks of colour, the severity of depiction and colour harmony deny any

<sup>43</sup> Guido Morris exhibited 50 additional prints. Bryan Wynter was absent from St Ives and the exhibition that year.

<sup>44</sup> SIT, 15 August 1947. quoted from Lynne Green (2001) p 90.

<sup>45</sup> Stephens (2000) p 83.

<sup>46</sup> Works in the artist collection are listed without location.

fluidity or transparency. Movement is everywhere in *St Ives Harbour*, stylistically in the dynamic application of brush-strokes, to the selection of broken colours, and mimetically in the depictions of a seagull in flight, three fishermen rowing and the overall sweeping compositional arrangement. By contrast, *Snow [Scene], St Ives*, is static, frozen in both its configuration as well as its theme. Composed with stark verticals and horizontals it is devoid of any traces of human life, other than habitation, and the footprints on the snow in the foreground. Similar rigidity is apparent in the selection of repeated rhyming shapes of either echoing or reversed patterns. Most obvious are mirror image of the staircases, creating an inverted triangle shape to the much smaller and pointed triangle of the gable top above them. The chimneybreast is echoed by the shadows of the doorway underneath it; the white diagonal of the guttering is echoed by other diagonals in the same direction and by its obverse on the left hand side house. The patterns of the crazy stone lying on the black wall are echoed and tonally reversed by the footprints on the snow. The comparison reveals that working in St Ives Barnes-Graham had replaced French modernism channelled via her Scottish tutors (see the poster of Scottish painters in French modernism hanging on the partition behind the group in the Crypt photograph. fig 1-chpt1-c) with an English modernism that focused on primitivizing forms rather than the liberation of the expression of colour. The early primitivizing attempts of Barnes-Graham were her experiments with subdued grey-greens as in the series of *Island Sheds, no.1*, March 1940 (fig 10) and *Island Sheds, no.2*, 1940 (fig 74). By 1947, *Snow [Scene], St Ives* and also in other paintings exhibited at the Crypt in 1947, such as the *White Cottage*, 1944, the harmonies are based on large expanses of warm and cold colour contrasts. These are variations on colouring method that she explored during her student years in assimilating Cézanne's example, and which she was to revisit throughout her life in various configurations, culminating in her *Scorpio Series* of the 1990s onwards paintings that constitute non-figurative brush strokes of highly saturated and contrasting colours (figs. 7, 87).



### The impact of arriving to St Ives

One of the much-repeated claims about the impact of St Ives on the art of Barnes-Graham is to ascribe her primitivizing tendency to the influence of Alfred Wallis (figs.69, 70). The claim has, once published, been uncritically repeated. Stephens writes in a categorical, seemingly informative and unquestioning tone that: "Berlin, Barnes-Graham and Early, who did not show in the Crypt, were more affected than the others by the influence of Alfred Wallis."<sup>47</sup> Her painting *Island Sheds, St Ives no 1*, (fig 10) has been used to illustrate this claim ever since the paintings' reproduction and discussion in the 1985 exhibition catalogue.<sup>48</sup> The argument hinges upon the high horizon, the colour harmony of greys and greens, and the circular outline of the island with the waves and slanting white ship at the top left hand corner.

Matthew Gale recently put the evocation of Alfred Wallis as the spirit of primitivism in St Ives, his highly mythologised persona into a more critical perspective.<sup>49</sup> In addition to Gale's timely broader contextualizing and critique of what the 'primitive' stood for, some additional, historical adjustments need to be made. Gale's adjustment is long overdue and a positive sign of a beginning of questioning critical consideration of the popular myth. But all the same, he overlooks the need for substantiating poststructural reading with empirical examination. I am referring here to questioning what might be contained in and meant by the concept of 'self-taught' by the representation of Alfred Wallis as arriving at painting from nowhere, as if by true magic. A representative collection of sailing ships 'portraits' is exhibited in St Ives Museum, (fig 71) all painted by artists of no academic training who followed a vernacular tradition. These artists were commissioned by the owners of the ships to paint them in a kind of diptych, of one image of sailing in clear waters, the others in

<sup>47</sup> Stephens (1997) p 25.

<sup>48</sup> St Ives (1985) pp 72, 162.

<sup>49</sup> Gale, Matthew (1999) 'Artistry, Authenticity and the work of James Dixon and Alfred Wallis' pp16-26. in Exhibition Catalogue *Two Painters: works by Alfred Wallis and James Dixon*. London: Merrell Holberton, in association with Irish Museum of Modern Art and Tate Gallery St Ives.

stormy seas. The popularity of these paintings, often with landmarks at their background, indicate to a much neglected local practice of painting, of which for instance Rubin Cappell, seemed to have been able to live comfortably from his paintings, of which 20, 000 are recorded.<sup>50</sup> The paintings of Inn signs and gates (examples of which are preserved and can be seen in St Ives Museum) are additional vernacular practice of stylistic similarities to Alfred Wallis' paintings.<sup>51</sup> The early photographs of Alfred Wallis, in bowler hat, in front of his shop of St Ives, (figs 28) as well as the documentations of his court case, when found to possess parts of a pirated wreck, defy the image of him usually propelled in the 'St Ives' Artwriting. The generalized term 'primitive art' is still used in an undifferentiated manner, and in the instance of Wallis, needs to be explored in connection with and linked to a local, non-academic tradition of painting, design and decoration, into which Wallis fits in perfectly.

Apart from the question of empirical contextualisation of Wallis painting practice, there is also the added issue of his 'discovery'. That question has two aspects that are relevant to my thesis: first, was he not 'discovered' already prior to the August 1928 famous visit? And secondly, was Winifred also there with Ben and Christopher on that historically marked day? There is much circumstantial evidence to believe that Alfred Wallis was already known to and collected by Cedric Morris. In his correspondence with Ben and Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood often refers to his professional and social encounters with Cedric Morris in Paris during the late 1920s, they recommended him to become a member of the *Seven and Five Society* and therefore the claim often aired, but never taken up by the dominant literature, that Cedric Morris already collected works by Alfred Wallis prior to his move to Paris in 1920, sounds as highly probable. Cedric's life and art practice indicate his sophistication of perception as well as commitment to primitivisms, which included

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<sup>50</sup> Information from Mrs Stephen of the St Ives Museum, 2.11.02.

<sup>51</sup> For instance the Ship Inn painted sign in St Ives Museum, on loan from Mrs Burch.

discovering and promoting marginalized artists, among whom, according to Lett-Haines's letters and biography, was also the unknown St Ives, Alfred Wallis. According to Lett-Haines, they knew and collected Alfred Wallis paintings prior to their move to Paris in 1920, and Christopher Wood therefore, went to St Ives, on that famous 1928 visit with Ben Nicholson with prior knowledge of what they were about to 'discover'.<sup>52</sup>

The reinsertion of Cedric Morris into the history of modernist primitivizing practices that were in operation during the interwar years, is relevant not only because it provides a corrective to accepted historical narrative, but also because it highlights the variations and many faceted roles that primitivism offered. This general point has also a specific relevance to the question of the much-repeated claimed influence of Alfred Wallis on Barns-Graham's art. The outcome of a truncated historicism of Barns-Graham's artistic formative years results in misrepresentation. In order to critique the mainstream argument, I will follow two paths of argument: first I will consider Barns-Graham's pre-St Ives primitivizing tendency, and secondly, look at primitivizing manifestations within artists who did not see Alfred Wallis.

Already as a student Barns-Graham displayed an aptitude for effective simplification in her designs, formulated in the style of the then all pervasive and fashionable Art Deco. Her desire for simplification took on a different stylistic mode within design and fine Art. Her gouache painting of 1930, *Carbeth Home Farm*, (fig 76) is composed in flat, simplified stretches of yellow paint, depicting fields; simple outlines demarcate the unmodulated white houses, a white that is not painted but left to show the bare white paper. Trees, roofs, doorways and shadows are of dark silhouetted and unmodulated monochromatic patches. The scene of the Home Farm is seen from a high viewing point, with a high horizon line, virtually the same as that of the horizon and houses in, *St Ives no 1* (fig 10). There is

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<sup>52</sup> See TAV 3817.1.1 2882-3.

therefore strong indication—that much of what is interpreted in the painting as—‘Wallis-inspired’ already had been expressed in her figuration prior to her arrival at St Ives. Furthermore, the formula she applies to depict waves is not necessarily Wallis-inspired, as similar compositional, formal and paint applications were already in use in modernist painting such as for instance the sea in K.L. Kirchner’s painting *Stepping into the Sea*.<sup>53</sup> By the time Barns-Graham arrived at St Ives in March 1940, she had graduated from a strict degree course, she had visited Paris, with her aunt and on her travelling scholarships, and there she went to see what could be regarded as most contemporary in modernist expressions. The *Island Sheds* paintings were painted within days of Wilhelmina’s arrival at St Ives, so how much of an impact Wallis might have had within this short time can also be questioned. Therefore, an Artwriting which limits the scope of influences solely to St Ives, Wallis, Nicholson and Lanyon, offers a restrictive and distorted narrative. It truncates the true, much broader sources of inspiration that Barns-Graham came across prior to her arrival at St Ives, or after it.

A close comparison between Wallis’ and Barns-Graham’s paintings - a comparison that was argued and explicitly made by hanging the two artists next to each other (November 1999-April 2000) - makes it clear that whatever similarities can be found between the two paintings, the differences are by far more significant. Wallis’s paint application is usually one of flat quality that graphically fills-in the outlines of his forms. While in Barns-Graham’s painting the limited colour range, is heightening the textural qualities of diverse brush work in various sections. Patterning by way of brush strokes, in Barns-Graham’s not only signals intentionality of an informed kind, but also aims at a totally different expressive mode from that of Wallis.<sup>54</sup> It is, therefore, puzzling that of all of Barns-Graham paintings,

<sup>53</sup> With the lecture and exhibition series of Hebert Read in Edinburgh, which favoured German Expressionism, and brought ECA students to much greater exposure to that kind of primitivism, Kirchner, Klee, Munch and other German modernists were already well known to Wilhelmina.

<sup>54</sup> In its diversity, the brush strokes patterning, is reminiscence of Van Gogh’s paint application for instance in his Arles landscape and street scenes.

this particular one – *Island Sheds, St Ives no 1* – has uncritically become the iconic one that is repeatedly used to stress the double tropes of ‘St Ives’ and ‘Wallis’.

An altogether different mood and composition is expressed in *Island Sheds, no 2*, 1940 of the same series (Fig 74). Although painted in the same colour harmonies as *No. 1*, it has an altogether different compositional outlay of superimposed horizontal strips of matter, in which the buildings are made central by their location as well as contrasting pale tones. This painting has by far a greater long-term relevance to one of Barns-Graham’s more persistent compositional traits, namely that of horizontal bands across the surface of the painted field. Throughout her life Barns-Graham revisited this kind of compositional arrangement with varying emphases on either notions of movement, or connotation of the limitation in perception, that only a truncated section of the whole picture, truth, or reality can humanly be perceived, or even an expression of the ephemeral nature of existence. To list but few examples: *Strung Forms Series (Geoff and Scruffy) Orange and Lemon*, 1963, (fig 77), *Requiem no 1*, 1965 (fig 78), *Two Reds, Two Greens*, 1968 (fig 79), *Requiem*, 1972 (fig 80), *Six Lines, Sand and Sea*, 1976 (fig 81), *Passing Over, Tribute Series*, 1982-1986, (fig 82), *Composition no 10*, 1984 (fig 83), *Connected Forms Series* of the late 1980s for example, *Connected Form I*, 1988 (fig 84), *Volcanic Wind*, 1994 (fig 85), *Eclipse, January*, 1999 (fig 86). It is one of the cohesive organising principles in her recent Scorpio Series, which is by far her most exquisite sustained expression for some three years from 1996- 2000 and paintings since then as in *Scorpio Series 3 no 1*, 1997 (fig 87) *Black Movement Over Two Reds*, 2000 (fig 88). Viewed from this perspective, that of Barns-Graham’s artistic preoccupation, the issue of some slight stylistic similarities between her 1940s paintings and those of Alfred Wallis fade into insignificance and triviality. As for the claimed similarity to Wallis in her colour harmony, Wilhelmina has convincing disclaimers that if mimesis is here the issue, then why stress the example of Wallis rather than relate the harmonies to those of her native St Andrew’s or even Edinburgh? But even more

importantly is that a careful visual analysis reveals completely different modes of both colour harmonies and of paint application. To sum up, both the visual analysis of the two artists' work as well as an overview of their total sum of artistic expression reveals that the claimed similarities are imposed against visual and documentary evidence to accommodate a masculine-centric narrative of 'St Ives'.

Without wishing to labour the point further, I want all the same to consider two additional representations of St Ives painted by Barnes-Graham in her early days in St Ives. *St Ives Harbour*, 1940 (fig 74a) which unlike the Island Shed paintings is of a different colour intensity, and evokes the mood of holiday and of a pristine, untroubled world, in stark expressive contrast to the harsh poverty and make-shift reality depicted in the Island Sheds series. Yet another architectural compositional format that Barnes-Graham used during the war years, are paintings of interiors that unlike the *Island Sheds* or *St Ives Harbour* indicate her use of observed wartime reality, and necessity in academic, accurate depictions, such as *Island Factory St Ives (Camouflage no.2)*, 1944 (fig 89), and *Toy Workshop, Digey, St Ives*, 1944, (fig 90). This architectural structure of composition is also one that Barnes-Graham would adhere to and return to in endless forms and manifestations throughout her life, but the significance of these paintings is the interest in and recording of local social history during war-time, born out of both reality and necessity- the limited painting locations available during the war.

The persistent mode of evaluation of Barnes-Graham in the 1985 catalogue and ever since in relation to 'St Ives' artists indicates the degree to which women painters are denied their professionalism in the modernist British Artwriting, a narrative that refuses to incorporate them into the canon but maintains the pernicious persistence of aligning women with naturalised primitivism. But to return to the question posed at the head of this section, of what is the gap between representation and the documentary evidence of Barnes-Graham

claimed appropriation of Wallis, it seems to be a convincing argument under a very generalized appreciation and a truncation of artistic life work, compounded by de-contextualizing the propensity of modernism at the time to primitivize.

### **The Crypt according to Lanyon**

While the reception of Barns-Graham's early St Ives painting is being read under the sign of Alfred Wallis, her claims about the events leading to the making and running of the Crypt are being altogether ignored. In his polemical correspondence, of 1949 Peter Lanyon rewrote the past with a view to self-promotion crediting Gabo with a pivotal role and casting an image of master and disciple between Gabo and himself. The use of the term constructivism is complex and diverse in this construction of history.<sup>55</sup> In Lanyon's view The Crypt established a young avant-garde that pulled in two opposed directions: Primitivism and Constructivism. The advanced 'moderns' were, obviously, those who followed Gabo's example and were informed by (Gabo's) constructivism, with Primitivism relegated to the lesser-valued mode of expression.<sup>56</sup> Lanyon's differential evaluation is based on his antipathy to and rivalry with Sven Berlin, and reveals not only a self-centred attitude but also a simplified generalization, that cannot see variations.

Primitivism, or more accurately Primitivisms, is possibly the most distinct expressive mode of 'St Ives' and its diversity both synchronically and diachronically still await detailed analysis. Its expression in the post-war years had different connotations from that of the late 1920s. The early meaning was an Other against which the untutored but aspiring Ben and Christopher measured themselves both advantageously and inspirationally. During the post-war years primitivism stood for innocence nostalgically desired to be regained at the

<sup>55</sup> It is likely that his avoidance of over-use of the term constructivism reflects Hepworth's and Nicholson's sensitivity to that very aspect, as the term constructivism was linked to Gabo since his departure from the USSR, and their attempted to appropriate and redefine it.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Lanyon wrote about these divergent pulls: "a tension was set up between the 'Primitive' of Sven Berlin and the constructivist attitude of Gabo...represented by Nicholson, Wells, Hepworth and myself." N.d. letter to Stanley Wright, Lanyon Archive.

aftermath of the recent war horrors. But in the rhetoric of 'St Ives' Alfred Wallis's primitivism offered a fixed index-of such significance that its meaning was both comodified and guarded to a degree of a battle of ownership over him.<sup>57</sup> The ownership of Wallis was no longer over either the appropriating of his style or even his example as a trope for intuitive creativity. Instead, after his death, and possibly during his last months in Madron Workhouse he became objectified, his art and reputation controlled for the benefit of the brokerage of his paintings.<sup>58</sup> In his article of 1943 Ben Nicholson rationalised the need to control Wallis' access to colour, the implication being that his 'childlike' personality needed patronising. Sven Berlin was the only one to aspire for primitive/surrealist affiliation, for which he found himself in a position of multiple confrontations; on stylistic grounds with Peter Lanyon; on 'ownership' of the story of Wallis with Ben Nicholson.<sup>59</sup> Ben's actions at that period indicate that he treated Wallis, the person, his art and reputation as his own private possession an attitude that became explicitly competitive when he learned that Berlin intended to publish an article about Wallis. While for the untutored 'boys', returning from the war and aspiring to become artists the model of Wallis was an example for intuitive inspiration, primitivism for Barnes-Graham was altogether of different emphasis. For her it was deliberate primitivizing that had more to do with cerebral questioning than with aiming to express herself intuitively. The poignancy of her effort, in my view is that of all the 'moderns' she alone seems to have wrestled with the question of what is it for a modern

<sup>57</sup> Matthew Gale (1999) *Two Painters: works by Alfred Wallis and James Dixon*, London, Merrell Holberton, in association with Irish Museum of Modern Art and Tate Gallery St Ives, discusses the ambivalence of what he calls 'mascot' paternalism, in 'Artistry, Authenticity and the work of James Dixon and Alfred Wallis', pp 16-26.

<sup>58</sup> Stephens astutely describes the 1950s as the decade when St Ives became a field of brokerage for collectors and gallery owners. His discussion however, is focused on the market for 'modern' artists, mainly the Younger Generation. The connotations of the brokerage of Wallis after his death in August 1942 have not yet been fully analysed. As for the brokerage of Wallis, in the interview of Barnes-Graham with her ex-husband, David Lewis and Sarah Fix-Pitt, she recalls that his door and table were painted. David Lewis becomes excited and forgets about the job at hand and contemplates whether these painting by Wallis still exist under the newly painted door.

<sup>59</sup> For Sven Berlin at that time, Wallis offered the richest model of inspiration for his primitivism, and surrealist overtones contained in the irregular cardboards, left as found as ground for Wallis's paintings. In this there is an element that could be read as an intuitive reaction to the *objet trouvé*. As for the 'ownership' over Wallis' reputation, Ben Nicholson writes about Wallis being taken to Madron Public Assistance Institution and how he brought paints for Wallis to paint and convinced the staff that he was a famous artist, see his Letter to H.S.Ede 29/8/42 Kettle's Yard Archive. Mellis recalled Ben's controlling what range of colours people brought him so as to make sure that he did not change his palette. TAV 272.



artist to move from one of the British capitals and attempt to make this peripheral and remote corner their home, in the same way that she alone took on herself to explore and record what were the local meanings of the war years.<sup>60</sup>

### Metaphors of war

In contrast to the orderly architectural compositions in which Barns-Graham primitivizes spatial perspective and volume, compositions of disorder, chaos and implosion or introversion can be read as standing for the destructive effects of war. In place of the fossilized order of architectonic simplicity, these images are of higgledy piggledy chaos, as for example in *Rubbish Dump*, 1947 (fig 91), *Design from Hayle Dock Yard*, 1947 (fig 92) and *Froth and Seaweed*, 1945 (fig 93). In these both the formal disorder of the composition as well as the poverty of the materials evokes time of uncertainty and material shortage. Views from the window, have in Barns-Graham paintings an altogether different meaning than those of Winifred or Ben Nicholson's paintings. They stand for the prohibition to paint during the war years out of doors, and thus painting through a window became the only possible way to draw directly rather than from memory or postcards, as seen in the drawing *St Ives*, c.1940, where the faint outlines of the window and curtains are marked in the foreground.

A different expressive mood appears in her paintings of 1948 as for instance in *Sleeping Town*, 1948 (fig 94), exhibited in the third Crypt show, late July, and *Box Factory Fire, Cornwall*, 1948 (fig 95) which can be considered as a visual inversion of each other, but unique when compared to all other artistic depictions of 'St Ives' artists. These paintings are concerned with contemporary social realities, and neither with autonomous artistic principles nor with purely aesthetic or philosophical contemplation of landscapes. *Sleeping Town* is a night scene, in which the solid bright yellow boats clearly set at the centre, glow in contrast

<sup>60</sup> As she did later in painting meditations and personal reactions to wars, for instance in *Bosnia* (fig 118). She even agreed to wave copyrights and permit reproduction of the image for the purpose of raising funds for Bosnian relief aid, that was organized by Zeljka Mudrovic in Exeter.

to its dark surrounding of rows of houses and skies in dark blue tones. Against the solidity of the boats the thin outlined houses in pale brush strokes seem fragile as if they were made out of glass. As a matter of fact, the houses' reflection in the water, in the foreground is of greater substance than the depiction of the terrace in the middle ground. *Box Factory Fire*, is viewed from a bird's-eye perspective and depicts the devastating aftermath of a factual fire. The composition sets out a tension between order – signified by the outline of the Island, and its St Nicholas chapel - and the chaos seen in the imploded building at the foreground. In contrast to the assured relief of a peaceful night here we wake up a day after a disaster has struck, to contemplate its effects not only on the landscape, as seen, but on the community as implied. In this oblique expression of a vision hovering between vision and communal concern, she here revisits the same kind of exploration she explored in her *Balustrade Series*.<sup>61</sup> In these paintings and others related to them in their expressive sensitivity, Barnes-Graham is both a visual artist and a social commentator.

### Penwith Society Of Arts and Crafts

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1949 PSAC was founded at the Castle Inn, at 2.45 p.m. where the seceding artists met. The secession was a direct outcome of mounting tensions between the R.A. artists and the 'moderns' after Smart's death (4<sup>th</sup> November, 1947).<sup>62</sup> The events leading to the break up from SISA started with an extraordinary meeting that was called by ten members who thought that Leonard Fuller, SISA's chairman, and David Cox, the secretary, were giving too much exposure to the 'moderns'. In the historiography of 'St Ives' the break-up from SISA has produced two misleading impressions about the nature of the New Society: First, that the new Society was exclusively 'modern', secondly, that initially the 'moderns' were a unified front of aims. However, neither of these is accurate.

<sup>61</sup> A series that she evidently was proud to display, judging from the arrangement of her studio in The Crypt Group photograph (fig 9). But now, probably due to the embarrassing ridicule of both the series and her name she was subjected to by her ex-husband D. Lewis, she shies away from both showing them either privately or publicly or even discussing them.

<sup>62</sup> For details of events see *St Ives* (1985) pp 105-106.

Both Fuller and Cox took on the same official positions in PSAC that they had in SISA, and the list of the signatory founders members indicates an equal balance between the 'traditional' and 'modern' painters (Appendix 28). And as matters evolved, it was the wrangling amongst the 'moderns' that brought about a rift among PSAC members within one year from its founding. The draconian rules and regulations were driven by Ben and Barbara's efforts to secure not only a space for the 'moderns' but also their control over the society prompted criticism and revolt within some of the young 'moderns', and to a lesser degree few 'traditoinalists'. Berlin and Segal were the first, Peter Lanyon followed suit, and by March 1950 all three resigned with Lanyon taking on a long battle of wills and reputation against Ben and Barbara.<sup>63</sup>

To start with, the New Society declared itself to being Catholic, a broad liberal organisation, even attempting to eradicate the distinctions between Art and Craft. The eventual committee's imposition of three distinct exhibiting groups: A- for figurative, B – for abstract and C – for crafts, could be seen, and indeed has been, as a means whereby the 'moderns' attempted both to make a cohesive group statement as well as appease for a while the 'traditionalists' on whose support they depended initially, but who eventually were edged out from centre stage.<sup>64</sup> It is telling that neither the craftspeople nor the figurative painters were the first to react against the rulings, but Sven Berlin, H. Segal and Guido Morris, who objected to the classification that the ruling imposed, into which artists with either primitive, surreal or humorous inclination would fit nowhere. Reading the minutes of PSAC casts doubt on the heroizing artwriting in which the secession, and the society's activities have been represented. Instead, a picture of gradual manipulation of influential local individuals emerges, for the purpose of winning local support for their actions and art. The first step in

<sup>63</sup> Peter Lanyon Archive, Newlyn mostly drafts to letters and left undated.

<sup>64</sup> Nicholson had already manipulated in the 20s the *Seven and Five Society* in London. Ben Nicholson's competitive self-promotion took on endless manifestations, for instance, in 1937, contrary to the usual listing of surnames according to alphabetical order, Ben insisted and argued that his name should appear prior to that of Gabo in the publication of *Circle*.

this direction was the decision to dedicate the Society to the memory of the recently—  
deceased liberal minded, Borlase Smart.

The inclusion of Crafts within PSAC has equally an ambiguous history, of initial democratic intentions, with subsequent marginalisation.<sup>65</sup> Guido Morris, the printer has already established a precedence for the inclusion of designer/Craftsmen amongst the ‘modern’s’ exhibition, the potter Bernard Leach and furniture maker Nance Dicon were a new addition to the Society, since they were not members of SISA, which as a Society included only Artists, in the traditional meaning of the word. Bernard Leach represented a veteran and respected potter, whose support added respectability to the new Society. Whether he joined the Society right at the beginning or a couple of days later remain unclear. According to Wilhelmina he was not an initial founder member, since he was not a member of SISA.<sup>66</sup> This claim can be supported by the curious exception of Leach’s place in the alphabetical order of the signatories in the list of the founder members. Leach’s name appears as last and is the only one not placed in its alphabetical order (Appendix 28) as well as written a different handwriting, which might indicate that it was added later. The literature ignores this matter despite the fact that on the Society’s first General Meeting Leach’s membership had to be proposed and voted for.<sup>67</sup> Analysing the Founders list it transpires that the Society was established by 7 traditionalists, 7 modernist (plus the cartoonist Segal) and three craftsmen (including Guido Morris). Barns-Graham was an unflinching supporter of PSAC’s aims to treat abstract and modern art as its concern. She observed: “Isobel Heath, Shearer Armstrong, Marjory Mostyn were all misfits in the Penwith.”<sup>68</sup> Her reasoning

<sup>65</sup> The full story of the early days of the Penwith Society still waits to be written, but it is significant that at some point the name of the society has been abbreviated to Penwith Society of Arts, omitting the Crafts from its title, though its exhibiting ethos has not changed. As fascinating as the story revealed in the minutes might be, its detailed analysis is only tenuously related to my thesis’s argument. The aspects that I have selected to discuss are all from PSAC TAM 76.

<sup>66</sup> Wilhelmina even stated that he had to be coaxed to join the Society. Rowan James reiterated the point in a phone conversation 22.8.00.

<sup>67</sup> Because the original of the minutes is unavailable for consultation my observations had to be made from the microfilm of it at the Tate Archive.

<sup>68</sup> Conversation 28.8.00.

being of typical avantgardist perspective and activist intent, for according to her people did not understand and support abstract art, she explains. From its inception she was one of the most adamant and dedicated member of PSAC and remained a staunch supporter of it throughout her life.<sup>69</sup>

### **The local and national positioning of PSAC**

PSAC's strategy for their positioning was planned for and directed at two fronts: locally and nationally. Locally, it was a battle for acceptance of which dedicating the Society to Smart's name was a part, to the extent of claiming that the new Society would have been his wish. Mrs Smart, his widow, was invited by the Society to arbitrate whether she believed it was so, and much of the local support depended and followed her affirmative answer. On the other front, the national one, Nicholson and Hepworth approached Herbert Read to accept the Presidency of the society, a shrewd decision considering his growing importance in the national and international arenas of the art world.<sup>70</sup> The selection had the bonus of making a statement against the reactionary inclination of Alfred Munnings, the reactionary President of SISA.

The 1985 exhibition claim of Penwith Society being the heroic victory of modernism in St Ives against the academic painters of the colony's needs questioning and qualifying, in the light of contemporary records both internally and from the cosmopolitan points of view. In terms of international practice, 'St Ives' practice is very much a *derrière-garde*, rather than cutting edge innovative by the late 1940s. Abstract painting, a European avant-garde expression since the second decade of the twentieth Century, was established and anachronistic to an extent in the way it was practiced by Ben Nicholson during the late 1940s early 1950s. Within the contemporary cosmopolitan arena, abstraction of the post-

<sup>69</sup> Wilhelmina's loyalty to Ben and Barbara whenever disputes occurred have cost her the friendship of Peter Lanyon who had been the best man in her wedding.

<sup>70</sup> After the war he became a member of the British Council's Art Advisory Committee. 1946 he went on international tour of talks; 1947 was involved in the founding of ICA

war period can be divided into the monumental, Jungian inspired, and national propagandists mode of expression of the New York School, on one hand, and the bleak, existential self-doubting European expressions, on the other. 'St Ives' belonged to neither. Its locally pitched positioning, (in their patronisingly confrontations with SISA and the public for not 'understanding' or accepting abstraction) that was vocalised during the early Carbis Bay Phase and during the late 1950s, and got its final configuration with Heron's active, argumentative self-publicising article of 1975, which links PSAC to the New York School not so much stylistically but rather from the point of view of exhibiting links. Since Heron's initial links with Clement Greenberg, there has been an overview to link St Ives abstraction with that of the New York School. In Barnes-Graham work there are two distinguishable phases of non-figurative affiliations during the 1950s: European-cerebral during the early years, and gestural during the later years. *Rock theme, St Just*, 1953 can be related to the interlocking monumental shapes of Poliakoff's paintings, (fig 97) and the two paintings of 1957, *Red Painting* (fig 98) and *White, Black and Yellow*, are in expressive terms akin to the paintings of Viera da Silva (fig 99). *Black Oval*, 1957, (fig 100) shows an affinity with Adolph Gottlieb's paintings.<sup>71</sup> These affinities, indicate that the decade of the 1950s was for Barnes-Graham's a time of growth, contrary to the representation of her work as if repeating endlessly and uniquely variations on the glacier theme.

Contrary to the masculine construct of 'St Ives', of the 19 signatory founders seven are women, of which only two, Hepworth and Barnes-Graham, were 'moderns' (Appendix 28). The indecisive initial nature of the Society in relation to the mix of 'traditionalists' and 'moderns' is even further stressed by the fact that Augustus John, whose work Ben Nicholson had dismissed, was invited to open the first exhibition of the Society, but when he declined the local novelist Phyllis Bottome opened it on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1949.<sup>72</sup> The

<sup>71</sup> There is much more to say about this, but since my focus is on how Barnes-Graham relates to the construct of 'St Ives', this is not the space for elaborating this point any further than stating it.

<sup>72</sup> *St Ives* (1985) p 106.

subsequent acceptance and rejection of artists who wished to become members is revealing in the bias of selection and in the inconsistency in the application of and commitment to 'modern' artists. For instance, John Tunnard, who had Surrealist affiliations was not accepted as a member of the Society,<sup>73</sup> but the primitive painter Mary Jewels, and the most celebrated of the Academicians, Dod Proctor R.A., were accepted. A democratic, inclusive culture was maintained in the Society's first exhibition (Appendix 33) but was concurrently being undermined by the imposition of draconian *Rules* -10 points, many with sub-sections- and *Bye Law* -18 points- (appendix 29). With hindsight, regret and anger Lanyon has given an astute description of the initial constituent elements within the Society and its internal power structure:

Social development of the Society in it's (sic) first year

The biggest factor socially within the society has been the establishment (by the 'modern' artists-crossed out) of a relationship between Crafts and arts which makes them interact and have a real relationship to one another in exhibition. This was obvious in the first exhibition and is largely missing in the current one (May 1950).

The 'moderns' being a force in the society without a great deal of cohesion and being essentially concerned with their individual development have no complexion of a School.

The traditionalists have however their masters and the definite cohesion of a 'school' of painting.

Within the society the moderns have only two masters- Nicholson and Hepworth around whom a school might form. But it is clear to most of the young artists that their work represents mainly the classical abstract – intellectual outlook and the true development in St Ives as seen in the Crypt could not continue within the confinement of this outlook alone. It is doubtful whether a crystallisation of outlook around these senior artists could in fact occur, though it is doubtless to them that many of the younger artists owe their development. ... It is essential that the modern element should remain an individual affair in order to effectively inject a constant experimental and new outlook into the society.<sup>74</sup>

Lanyon's sense of democratic justice made him recall the not-so-democratic ways in which the rulings were obtained as "the ruling itself was proposed by a member of the Committee, Ben Nicholson. (I stated my objections as a member of the Committee)", and suggested that it would be fair to add a ruling that gave recourse to the members in case of their grievances against the Committee.<sup>75</sup> While much of the correspondence by Lanyon and others, involved in the debate, has been about the internal politics, either attacking or justifying its

<sup>73</sup> 21. February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, *St Ives* (1985) p 105, & TAM 76/1, p 7. It is not only interesting in relation to his affiliation with a Surrealist mode but also in relation to Ben Nicholson's careful overlooking of anyone who either had earlier or contemporary affiliation to European abstraction. D. Brown writes in the 'Biographical Notes' that Tunnard had been painting in an abstract mode since 1935 under the influence of the examples of Klee and Miró. *St Ives* (1985) p 143.

<sup>74</sup> PLA, n.d. probably the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1950 part of his detailed letters, no 6.D.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

machinations, very little was being said about the artistic aspects that caused this wrangling.

In another undated draft, headed: Report on the foregoing (sic.), Lanyon gives a lucid picture of the artistic constituents of the Society:

Underlying it all however is a fundamental difference of outlook and approach between Three elements in the society, namely the older traditional artists represented by Fuller, the contemporary 'abstract' artists represented by Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth and the romantic primitive artists represented by Sven Berlin.<sup>76</sup>

Having identified the sectors he continues to link these to the power structure:

The first element, the traditional, however holds the chair and is more concerned with the established professional positions of Nicholson and Hepworth and those members named by them as 'promising' so that for all practical purposes these first two elements operate together. However, the element represented by Sven Berlin because of its anti social bias, small sense of social morality and a certain disregard for any rules orders or laws in any society, provides countless reasons for the more Philistine in the Society to discount their contribution. It is however generally untrue to group any of these more romantic artists together with Sven Berlin because they remain essentially individuals who cannot be relied upon to carry out any consistent government of support of society. This leaves them open to exploitation by more coordinated and thinking groups in the society – in this case the Abstract-traditional alliance. The third element of craftsmen has most unfortunately been without leadership during this period, because of the absence of Bernard Leach. ...I suggest however that the chairman and committee of 1949 who formed the rule (and of which I was a member) are guilty of undemocratic and arbitrary rule in the introduction and passage of this Law.<sup>77</sup>

This analysis must be considered as accurate not only for its 'eye-witness' nature, more significantly for the surprising sympathy and support that Lanyon offers Berlin, despite his earlier admission to the antipathy he had towards Sven. Lanyon objected, in all probability to a circular issued by Penwith Society, signed by the Hon. Secretary, Shearer Armstrong dated 29<sup>th</sup> November (1949) which calls upon members to select the group they wish to belong to, otherwise the committee will have to allocate them. The circular list of binaries that 'illustrate' what the groups A & B stand for as follows:

A	B
Traditional	Contemporary
Representational	Abstract
"Port"	"Starboard"
Right	Left
"Ancient"	"Modern" <sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> PLA, n.d.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> from n.d. letter PLA.



Lanyon was right in echoing the claim of the 'the Romantics' (whom he confesses not to like) that their practice could not fit into any of the prescribed groups. In addition, it needs to be stressed that during the post-war years, neither Nicholson, Hepworth, Barnes-Graham, nor Lanyon have practised purely and solely abstraction; John Wells was probably the only artist who did.

The strategic steps of 'taking over' an Art Society, from becoming a member to controlling the ruling of the Society, as it was played out in St Ives, has been a carbon copy of previous similar manoeuvring by Nicholson in London in the 1920s; from the *Seven and Five Society* take-over,<sup>79</sup> joining Nash's *Unit 1*<sup>80</sup> and making undermining it, *Axis* which resisted the drive to make it a platform for non-figurative art only, and became instead a stronghold of the New Romantics, and finally, *Circle*, the publication and exhibition that pitched itself in contrast to and in competition with the success of the International Surrealist Exhibition of 1936.<sup>81</sup> The incursion into St Ives happened gradually. From Nicholson's participation in the Show Day in Borlase Smart's studio, 1944, to exhibition with SISA of a small group of Carbis Bay 'moderns' during the war years, to be followed by the post war 'young moderns' in The Crypt, 1946, and after the death of Smart to the final secession and foundation of PSAC in 1949. Once PSAC was established both crafts and the 'traditional artists' were gradually marginalized mainly due to the interest of Nicholson and Hepworth of self-promotion under the rhetorics of abstraction. At every stage the actions were dominated by the drive for privileged positioning, while at the same time building up a body of patrons as well as the support of local sympathetic and influential individuals.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Which was discussed as a plan of action in the correspondence between Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood.

<sup>80</sup> The first Society to offer a multiple public exposure: the permanent book, and the ephemeral exhibition. This model was later replicated by *Axis* and *Circle*.

<sup>81</sup> See Michel Remy (1999) *Surrealism in Britain* Aldershot, Ashgate, pp 73-100.

<sup>82</sup> It will suffice to leave it here as a generalised statement, but it is made on the basis of detailed reading of the Society's minutes. An in-depth analysis of the minutes and the dynamics of the society is long overdue, but such a detailed analysis is outside the focus of this thesis.

The planning that the various committees invested in achieving both national symbolic capital and local control and power, was mindful of the post war change of mood in the art institutions and the new order. At the first meeting of PSAC, the second item on the agenda. After deciding the name of the Society, was a vote of thanks to Barbara Hepworth for her offer to help in negotiating with the Arts Council on behalf of the Society.<sup>83</sup> Most relevant within this new climate of the welfare state was the growing acceptance of the idea of art as a civilising instrument. New art institutes took on activities by assuming a didactic, pastoral role: The Arts Council over the national, British (mainly English) public,<sup>84</sup> The British Council – a cultural/nationalist propaganda of self-promotion aimed at public outside Britain,<sup>85</sup> and the Institute of Contemporary Art and London County Council.<sup>86</sup> These institutional changes impacted on the self-promotional opportunities available to artists, most significantly, obviously, in a shift in the paradigm of patronage. Nicholson and Hepworth's leadership within PSAC operated, thus, on two fronts: they established their exhibition space and society locally, and were a useful connection to the new art administrators in London.<sup>87</sup> Locally, their connections made them indispensable for their direct access to decision-making individuals within the new Art Institutions, while they used PSAC as an exemplary regional configuration of the very qualities sought after and promoted by the new didactic ideology, and which offered a successful case to be supported. 'St Ives' offered to the mandarins<sup>88</sup> of the institutions a ready-made example of vibrant 'provincial' art activities, while its growing reputation attracted collectors, dealers, and art-world officials to St Ives.

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<sup>83</sup> TAM 67/1 p 1.

<sup>84</sup> Formally founded by Royal Charter on 9 August 1946, See B. Taylor (1999) *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London public 1747-2001*, Manchester University Press, pp 175-6.

<sup>85</sup> It was named as The British Council on 1935 (previously: British Council for Relationships with Other Countries est. Dec. 1934). After the war it became the Council's Advisory Committee on Fine Art, which included "Philip Hendy (Dir. Of National Gallery), John Rothenstein (Dir. Of the Tate), Campbell Dodgson (former Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the BM), Kenneth Clark, Clive Bell and Herbert Read." Taylor (1999) pp176-177.

<sup>86</sup> Both established in 1948, see Taylor (1999) pp 188-91.

<sup>87</sup> For an overview of the institutional changes in the Arts Administration during the Post War Years see Brandon Taylor (1999) 'post-war positions: Arts Council, LCC, ICA' pp 167-202 in *Art For the Nation*. Anne Massey (1995) 'Welfare State Culture' pp 4 -18 in *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-59*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press.

<sup>88</sup> To use Taylor's expression (1999).

Within short time of founding PSAC Hepworth and Nicholson attracted numerous public commissions and prestigious invitations to exhibit from London and abroad.

The new order brought about a paradigm shift for commissioning which replaced the earlier one that was based on cultivation of personal friendships. While during the pre war years collectors and patrons were individuals of the gentry or the new moneyed industrial sectors – such as Helen Sutherland,<sup>89</sup> Margaret Gardiner, Marcus Brumwell<sup>90</sup> Adrian Stokes, H. S. Ede,<sup>91</sup> Herbert Read and Norman Reid or relatives as Sir John Summerson - in the post war years commissions and acquisitions were placed by personally cultivated officials. The early manifestations of courting the new official officers of the art institutes started with the third Crypt exhibition, 1948,<sup>92</sup> which Francis Watson, the director of Visual Arts at the British Council was invited to open,<sup>93</sup> as well as the many visits to St Ives and contacts with Philip James, the Director of the Arts Council. Philip James subsequently became a supporter of Ben Nicholson's personal/artistic interests in obtaining and later retaining his Porthmeor Studio.<sup>94</sup> Hepworth's Trewyn became the ideal location to entertain in official visitors. When Hepworth visited London the Committee decided:

to write to Miss Hepworth in London & put this [inquiring whether the Arts Council would support the payed position of a secretary and curator to the society] as a concrete proposition, & ask if she could put it before Mr Philip James of the Council or Miss Mc Lean who was at Headquarters in charge of regional experiments.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>89</sup> See Val Corbett (1996) *A Rhythm, a Rite and a Ceremony*, Helton, Midnight Oil.

<sup>90</sup> Who helped finance the *Abstract & Concrete* exhibition.

<sup>91</sup> Despite the fact that in the mid 20s, when Ben Nicholson met him he was an assistant to the Director of the Tate, his enthusiasm for modernism singled him out from the rest of the staff of the museum and rather than acquiring paintings for the Tate he became himself an ardent collector of a particular strand of British Modernism that can be defined as abstracted figurative with a strong predilection for primitive or primitivising depiction qualities.

<sup>92</sup> Which P. Lanyon estimates as the most important and extensive of all the Crypt shows.

<sup>93</sup> The first was opened rightfully by Borlase Smart, the second by the liberal activist and a lady novelist of significant local status, Phyllis Bottome.

<sup>94</sup> After the war the running and letting of the studios became the responsibility of the Arts Council. On his visits to St Ives Philip James had been received like a royal and very select number of people were invited to these gatherings at Trewyn and were perceived as private entertaining rather than on behalf of the Society. That befriending stood both Hepworth and Nicholson in good stead. For instance, during Lanyon's hate campaign against Nicholson he attempted to reclaim SISA's right to studio 5 (it had been procured with funds raised by SISA and topped up by the Arts Council) and wrote a letter to this effect to Philip James. He in turn ruled in favour of Nicholson.

<sup>95</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> February 1950, TAM 76/1 p 51.

When Philip James's visit was planned, Hepworth extended an invitation to the committee "to a Sherry party on Friday 31 March 5.30 pm to meet Mr Philip James".<sup>96</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March Hepworth reassured the Committee that "in view of the importance to the Arts Council that the Penwith Society should be stable & running smoothly, a grant before 1951 was probable."<sup>97</sup> On reading out a letter from John Rothenstein, then the Director of the Tate Gallery, accepting an invitation to open an exhibition of PSAC the following year, Hepworth offered to entertain him.<sup>98</sup> The fact that some of the new officials in the national art scene were personal friends from the interwar years offered Hepworth and Nicholson an easy access to funds and support, such as Herbert Read, who was invited and agreed to be the president of PSAC,<sup>99</sup> and Norman Reid, who had been a keen follower and a collector; his appointment as the Director of the Tate Gallery signalled the official acceptance of Nicholson into the museum's collection.<sup>100</sup> The promotion of the activities in St Ives, and particularly of PSAC, were upheld as a model for the welfare state ethos, and offered at the same time to the artists a direct connection to grants, commissions, acquisition, and invitation to exhibit in national and international shows.<sup>101</sup> So while locally Hepworth and Nicholson, with the help of Leach and Lanyon, marshalled the support of the local public, nationally their activities in St Ives were used to draw attention to both their artwork and to their regional activities. A tight network of interdependent fields was managed in order to create symbolic capital and negotiate both fields for their personal gains, for which end an artistic output was not sufficient and required equal effort to be invested in avant-gardism

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., March 20 1950, p 67.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p 58.

<sup>98</sup> On 6 July 1951, the invitation was without any idea of the dates or which exhibition it might be. D. Lewis tried to press the committee to decide at least on a date. TAM 76/1, p 53. As it turned out, J. Rothenstein opened the exhibition held for the local celebrations of the Festival of Britain.

<sup>99</sup> But only on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August could "Miss Hepworth sent a message that Herbert Read would be able to give a Presidential Address to the Society on Wed. 7<sup>th</sup> Sept at 8pm."

<sup>100</sup> Norman Reid's appointment meant a sympathetic change towards Nicholson's work in contrast to Rothenstein's resistance to purchase for the Museum any of Nicholson's work and to the cautious distance that Kenneth Clark kept from modernism, being a keen promoter of classical following. Clark's eventual purchase, that is, private one, of B. Nicholson's work has been seen as a break-through in the artist's eye, as indicated by his use of the postcard with the work and stressing this fact when renewing his contacts with Ede.

<sup>101</sup> For instance at the Committee meeting of the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1950, a letter was read from Mr. Wood Parker of the Arts Council stating that he wanted to visit St Ives to choose pictures for the Travelling Winter Exhibition, TAM 76/1 p 85.

and self-positioning. In a strategic way positioning in one field helped in improving the standing in the other.

### PSAC's- internal politics

A tension existed between the new Society's decision be Catholic in outlook,<sup>102</sup> its unstated ethos of spontaneous, untutored expression in art, and its tightly regulated and autocratic tone of its operations. At the second Committee meeting, 10, February 1949, Hepworth – in order to rectify the fact that Peter Lanyon failed to be elected for any office at the Society's first G.M. - proposed that Peter Lanyon would be appointed as an "Assistant Secretary (Liaison Officer) to deal with the press."<sup>103</sup> A letter was circulated to all the members stating:

Under the urgency of the sudden notice attracted to the Society through the recent Press, it was decided at a meeting of the committee to appoint Mr Peter Lanyon 'Liaison Officer' to the Secretary, in order that a unified answer should be given to all enquiries from Press representatives and members of the General Public. You are therefore asked not to give personal expressions in answer to the enquiries of journalists and others, but to refer all questions to Mr. Peter Lanyon.<sup>104</sup>

At the third Committee meeting, 16, Feb, the discussion focused on the control over Porthmeor studios<sup>105</sup> and the first mention was made of calling a G.M. to discuss the Society's rules; there was also for the first mention of 'lay members', a status to be given to local dignitaries and influential individuals. The list of members and lay members was to be published in the catalogue. The rest of the meeting was spent in drafting the rules for the members' approval. At the G.M., 21 Feb at St Christopher's, the first sign of dissention appeared with Segal and Mitchell protesting at the unconstitutional way that Lanyon has been appointed rather than elected by the G.M. Lanyon immediately resigned from the post, election was called for, and he was elected with a big majority. The search for the Society's premises was the next item on the agenda and a sub-committee was elected for this

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<sup>102</sup> TAM 67/1, p 1.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p 5.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p 6.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p 6.

purpose.<sup>106</sup> On the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, a G.M., 14 March, a sub-committee was elected to find out the possibility of taking over the local Journal *Cornish News Letters*.<sup>107</sup> At that same meeting it was announced that the Public Hall was available for 3 years at 35 shillings a week and that the fees have been promised by two gentlemen from the city.

While initially the lay-members were courted for their support of the new Society, when the rift about the ruling and its despotic application came to a head with the resignation of Segal, Heath and Berlin, Ben Nicholson suggested an amendment "that rule 17 should be read to lay members, to remind them that upon professional matters they had no vote & that at the last General Meeting this voting was out of order."<sup>108</sup> The search for affordable premises for exhibitions and other activities came up after much negotiation with a hall that had to be shared with the local Labour Party, a partnership that, as things turned out, was only on paper and did not interfere with PSAC, though it was used occasionally to defer decisions the Society was not keen on.<sup>109</sup>

The next stage was to write a set of rigorous rules for the members of the Society and, the most divisive decision of all, the segregation of the members according to style and practice into the A, B and C groups standing respectively for Figurative artists, 'moderns' abstract artists, and crafts (appendix 29, 31). This was a crucial move to regulate and control the Society internally. The proposed allocations that was read in the meeting on (early December, 1949) went as follows: A- Shearer Armstrong, Leonard Fuller, Marion Hocken, Jeanne du Maurier ( later crossed out), Marjorie Mostyn, Misomé Peile, Dod Proctor (R.A).(crossed out) and A. Sefton; and for group B- W. Barnes-Graham, Agnes Drey, T.E.C.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p 8. The new members approved on this meeting were: Dorothy Baigly, Brian Winter (sic), David Haughton, Tom Early, Garlic Barns, Mesomé Piel, Dod Proctot, Arnold Foster, and craftsmen David Leach, Cardew, A. Carne, and Alice Moore.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p 9.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p 58.

<sup>109</sup> As deferring discussions on Lanyon's suggestion of letting out the hall for other exhibitions, with the excuse of having to share the premises with the party and with election time coming up, TAM 76/1, p 47.

Early, David Haughton, Barbara Hepworth, Mary Jewels, Hilda Jillard, Peter Lanyon, Denis Mitchell, John Wells and Bryan Wynter. Following the orderly listing of rules and allocations of artists comes a paragraph that indicates the resistance and foretells of more troubles to arise within the society:

Sven Berlin declined to be placed in any group considering the grouping to be artificial and unnecessary & expressed his oppositions to the scheme. Isobel Heath also declined to be placed in any group. H. Segal, speaking at some length, expressed himself as being dead against the scheme. He said the New Society had been formed to get away from such an artificial state of affairs, & he thought the two groups had in them the seeds of dissension, which would eventually break up the Society. He also declined to be allocated to a group.<sup>110</sup>

The criticism of the artificiality and controlling elements within the ruling were rational and accurate but deflected and at the end the decision of the Committee was imposed:

Letters from Miss Isobel Heath, Mr David Cox & Mr Sven Berlin were read & together with a letter Mr. Lanyon had sent to members of the Committee, were considered. After a very lengthy discussion, it was agreed that the Chairman & the Hon. Secretary should compose a letter to the first three, (significantly not to Lanyon) asking them once again to conform to the rules of the Society by entering one of the groups A or B. The majority of the Committee felt a last effort should be made to persuade these members that no Society could work if a very small minority was allowed the privilege of refusing to conform to rules passed by a majority at two successive general meetings.<sup>111</sup>

In a post-script to the minutes a succinct and severe note registers the acceptance "With regret" of the resignation of the three members. Only at the next Committee Meeting is W. Barnes-Graham listed again (since her being on the list of founder members) and this time as one of the committee members<sup>112</sup> and for the first time listed as proposing a motion, that "all elections should be by secret ballot, and this was carried." What this indicates is that Barnes-Graham has been not only an integral and active member of the Society, but also that in both instances her role came to the fore at moments of either crisis, or turning points, which situation was to repeated next during the 'closing of ranks' that was to take place after the resignation of Peter Lanyon.

The minutes provide ample evidence that Wilhelmina was an active and central member of the New Society, but while she was as Douglas Hall has claimed 'at the right place at the

<sup>110</sup> TAM 76/1, pp 40-41.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 7<sup>th</sup> February 1950, p 51.

<sup>112</sup> So was her husband David Lewis who it was suggested should act as a paid secretary and curator for the Society for the fee of £ 3.- a week and 5% commission on sales. TAM 76/1, p 50.

right time',<sup>113</sup> her position within the avant-garde of 'St Ives' has to be qualified. Just like the disparity between the seeming dominance of, say, Fuller or Armstrong, and their actions, equally so Wilhelmina's position exemplified the stratification that existed within the Society. If the veterans, both 'traditionalists' and 'moderns', supported by their younger male disciples, were at the forefront of the battle for dominance, she belonged to the second level of the society's hierarchy, whose support was essential and relied upon mainly at moments of crisis, and especially at the secession, after the first group resignation, and during the aggressive battle of words that followed the resignation of Peter Lanyon. In that sense Barns-Graham and Mitchell played a parallel role as the backbone of the society. Artistically, however, she fared much better, and in 1951 was on a par with Hepworth locally, as well as with the 'moderns' in national and international exhibitions.

The actions to control the members and the scheme of exhibitions are manifested indirectly by the fact that, according to the minutes of the Hanging Committee meeting, 25 February 1950, Barbara Hepworth made most of the suggestions, and they all relate to regulating how many works each artist could exhibit, and the rules of acceptance.<sup>114</sup> Once the Society was established and running, the committee guarded its right to the word 'Penwith' in all matters relating to art, to the history of the Society, and even at times over civic matters.<sup>115</sup> The control over the town began with the simple sign to be painted and hung in the Railway station about the Society. It proceeded to domains not linked to art at all such as Nicholson's suggestion that a florescent light should be bought for the Fore Street end.<sup>116</sup> For instance, when Peter Lanyon read at a committee meeting a letter from Denys Val Baker stating his intention to publish a booklet entitled *Penwith Paintings*, a decision had been passed to write to him and state that the Society:

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<sup>113</sup> Retrospective 1989.

<sup>114</sup> TAM76/1, p 54

<sup>115</sup> As in the Society's involvement of the locations and format of signs in the town or how shopkeepers ought to arrange aesthetically their shops' window displays.

<sup>116</sup> Not surprisingly very near to his new home at St Ives. TAM 76/1, p 66.



— had established a right to the title 'Penwith' in connection with the Arts and Crafts & it should not be used for a booklet which was not wholly concerned with the Society; nor should such a publication (not sponsored by the Society) be sold in the gallery. The Committee would welcome a personal discussion with Mr. Val Baker before the matter was carried further.<sup>117</sup>

### **Penwith Society and the local celebrations of the Festival of Britain**

The dual, local-and-national, art activities in St Ives came to a frenzied head with the preparations for the 1951 Festival of Britain which, in contrast to the national celebrations in London, have been completely overlooked by art historians. 'Miss Hepworth' was nominated as the Penwith Society's representative of the 1951 Festival Town Committee,<sup>118</sup> and thus held an official role in both the local and the national committees preparing for the events (Appendix 30).<sup>119</sup> The positive response and support from the officials in London grew at the very time that the cracks and tensions within PSAC came to a head, first with the resignations of Segal, Isobel Heath and Berlin, in March early March<sup>120</sup> and in May even more crucially the resignation of Lanyon and Morris. From the minutes concerning the Festival of Britain topic from early March onwards it seems that the Committee impressed on the members that the support of the Arts Council would be at stake if a united front was not presented to them.<sup>121</sup> The Town's effort for the Festival was to be divided into three areas: "1) The General Public, 2) All St Ives artists, 3) The Penwith Society." For that purpose Hepworth suggested a detailed ten-point plan of action that entailed artistic activities both in studios and in and for the town. The competition of one painting, one sculpture and one work of craft was to be won by Barns-Graham, Hepworth and Leach respectively. It has been the second affirmation of Barns-Graham's attaining her maturity in the eyes of the national establishment, as already on 18 April 1950 she asked for permission to remove her painting *Glacier (Tiger)* from the current PSAC exhibition because Mr. Philip

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p 46.

<sup>118</sup> TAM 76/1, p 47. Ben Nicholson proposed that B. Leach "be nominated to take her place if necessary."

<sup>119</sup> The detailed minutes of PSAC's meetings letters and negotiation make a fascinating reading about manipulating the local council, the city council, the competition with SISA, and the grants from the Arts Council.

<sup>120</sup> *St Ives* (1985) quotes her letter of disillusion published; SIT of 10.3.50, p 106.

<sup>121</sup> TAM 76/1, p 58.

James had asked for it to be shown to the Arts Council Committee.<sup>122</sup> To be selected the following year by Sir John Rothenstein as the winning painter certainly marked a sense of her success. The event was of local and national significance at the time

Barbara Hepworth won the prize for sculpture, with *Rock Form (Penwith)*, 1951, and the work is still placed on the issue desk of the town's library (figs. 101a&b). W. Barnes-Graham won the painting competition with *Porthleven*, 1951 (fig. 102). While the elongated horizontal frame of the painting echoes that of Lanyon's, the composition combines Barnes-Graham's earlier tendencies of the mid to late 1940s. It is a successful solution in combining rather than contrasting elements of order and chaos, and is figured with a lessening reliance on narrative implication than that contained in the painting *Box Factory Fire* (fig 95). The composition organises the landscape into a balance between movement and stasis, with the curve of the horizontally stretched 's' shapes, that develop into spirals, and swirl around each other in an exaggerated pattern that its degree of artistic licence can be seen when compared to photograph taken from the same spot (fig 103). Swirls of warm earth colours are held in check by dark tones and cooler colours that surround them. The painting is an apt example of Wilhelmina's written statement declaring her artistic intention:

I seldom do a purely abstract painting: I am interested in using abstract forms mainly insofar as they are derived directly from natural sources by means of simplification within the movement of the picture itself: painting is pattern, and painting should be just as good upside down, sideways, in a looking glass: I use a looking {glass} constantly in painting, and often turn my compositions upside down and on end when I am working.<sup>123</sup>

The statement expresses accurately the new configuration that she attained with *Porthleven*, and it also indicates her own formulation at that time for abstracting for intellectual and formalist reasons rather than simply appropriating the older masters' example. In effect there seems to be an interesting dialogue and exchange of interests, of shared and diverse

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p 75.

<sup>123</sup> Wilhelmina's typed note for Hodin as information for his article on her. Green (2001), who quotes this passage, p 117, points out that there is some uncertainty to the date of this note, fn. 21, p 289. While the note is dated 1948, it lists work from 1949. Dating issue apart, what is significant for my argument is that it has been written prior to actually painting *Porthleven* for 1951 The Festival of Britain local Celebrations, as Hodin's 'Cornish Renaissance' in *Penguin New Writing* (ed John Lehmann) 39, appeared in 1950.

aspects between her and Lanyon's late 40s and early 50s art work. Superficially *Porthleven* can be linked to Lanyon's *Horizontal by the Sea*, 1948 (fig 105) and *West Penwith*, 1949 (fig 106). But rather than looking at an out of context synchronic comparison, a diachronic consideration of the artistic intent and, indeed, of the expressive and imaginary directions that each of the artists followed exposes how different they really are. While Lanyon's titles at the time increasingly indicate abstracted generalised notions, his detailed account of paintings moves into intensified personal expression of his notion of rebirth, of himself as a surviving soldier, of his beloved Cornwall and of the wondrous experience of the birth of his first son.<sup>124</sup> Comparing Lanyon's *The Yellow Runner*, 1946 (fig 95) to Barnes-Graham's *Box Factory Fire*, their mutual interest in vulnerability and desire for a womb-like secure reassurance is an expression of one of the dominant feelings in Britain as the reconstruction of the war-damaged environment got gradually under way. Lanyon pictures this sentiment in a generalised, primordial, animistic manner that relates strongly to his personal situation. Barnes-Graham by contrast looks at a specific local anecdotal event that comments on the local community and can also be projected as a metonym of the recent events. Their different focus of attention, thus, defies the cultural differentiation that allocates ideas of birth to the feminine and that of the public domain of politics and societal structures to the masculine psyche. Attempting to locate this contrast within their personal and artistic specificity of the time, it is possible to see the reversal as an expression of the societal changes of the time. The post-war years promoted a dominant image of male heroism, while every male survivor had to come to terms with the emasculating experience (even more so if they did not serve in combat, as was the case, women, according to the mood of the time, made way for the returning boys and gave way in all the professional fields, especially in the arts. Wilhelmina's position was somewhat ambiguous in that sense. Like others, she was more than keen to accommodate the returning men in their artistic aspiration,

<sup>124</sup> Much has been written on this issue, especially in relation to his Generation Series. For the most recent discussions see Garlake (1998) 'The Generation of Landscape' pp 22-45; and Stephens (2000) 'Generation and Reconstruction' pp 47- 60.

but was at the same time apprehensive about the traditional role of women at the time of marriage domestic responsibility and motherhood, as a threat to her professional life.<sup>125</sup>

*Porthleven* is the first large painting that Wilhelmina undertook. In ECA, she recalls, she was taught to paint small, sellable paintings, but only at the age of forty did she decide that she would tackle a large composition and state her standing as equal to that of her male colleagues.<sup>126</sup> *Porthleven* marks an important turning point in Barnes-Graham's career, but it is relatively speaking a marginal painting and it only served to position her in the attention of the representatives of the official museum world in London, she already had local status and was seen as having growing significance in the London commercial west-end galleries. In terms of her creative output it was the *Glacier Series* that marked her out as an artist of originality. It is possible that the small amount of attention that has been directed at *Porthleven* is partially due to her self-effacing attitude towards this painting<sup>127</sup> but it is by far more significant to consider it in relation to the figurative-abstract debate in the art world at the time.

This gap between claims, and theoretical orthodoxies and practices, was manifested during the last couple of years in various ways. Ben Nicholson, for example, prided himself in painting large, complex still life paintings;<sup>128</sup> Barbara Hepworth's post-war work returned to figuration with a vengeance. It appeared in her drawings, reliefs and freestanding

<sup>125</sup> Wilhelmina was mindful that domestic responsibilities might impinge on her time and might restrict her professional commitments. The fear had according to her two sources, first the domestic scene at her parental home, as well as the realisation that women artists could only make it professionally if they did not have children. In addition the notion of maternity, was a difficult one for her since there were several deaths and near deaths during childbirth in her family. The topic was repeated on many interviews with the artist.

<sup>126</sup> Conversation with the artist, 28.8.00. The issue of large scale paintings as statement of achievement is repeated and important in punctuating W. Barnes-Graham's oeuvre.

<sup>127</sup> Wilhelmina claims that the only reason she won was that Ben Nicholson was absent. There is an inevitable assumption a men painter would be given priority.

<sup>128</sup> On the 31 Dec (47) in a long letter asking for still life illustrations of his early years he also adds "My things have mostly been still lifes – v much more complex than they used to be." Kettle's Yard Archive, Ben Nicholson, File 11, no. 39. In a postcard of his own *Still Life Oval Theme*, July 8-47, Ben Nicholson writes to Ede: "Have done some large ptgs since getting a big studio in St Ives,...a development from this old still life theme." Kettle's Yard Archive, Ben Nicholson, File 11, no. 39.

monumental sculptures, as well as in her small-scale sculptures. Soon after the war she sculpted in wood *Single Form (Dryad)*, 1945-6, profiles in *Two Heads (Janus)*, 1948 and in *The Cosdon Head*; <sup>129</sup> in 1949 she produced a series of figurative drawings: of male and female nudes and the series of operation theatre drawings of 1947. <sup>130</sup> These figurative works were promoted by Ben Nicholson as an important new development. <sup>131</sup> The same applied to her monumental sculpture, in which she used the idiom of the human figure for public work, as in the relief *Verical Forms*, 1949 <sup>132</sup> and in free standing *Contrapuntal Forms* for the London Festival of Britain. <sup>133</sup> The fact that she decided to make a figurative sculpture for the local competition of the Festival of Britain, an image of carved profile in the hollow of a large pebble-like stone, indicates the degree to which the return to figuration was at the time conceptualised in different terms during the post war years on the one hand and to the fact that it driven by both a necessity of securing commissions as well as a personal conviction on the other. <sup>134</sup> Hepworth's winning sculpture for the local arts competitions is an abstraction that contains her new *weldanschauen* and a personal musing, in its reference to the positive emotions of the 1930s profiles, now formulated in a hollowed-out, as a memory imprint of an absence. <sup>135</sup> None of the local winning works, by Barnes-Graham, Hepworth or Leach, were discussed in 1985 catalogue nor were they incorporated into the mainstream literature or elsewhere. For PSAC and in St Ives the events were celebrated all the same. The reasons for this can only be guessed. It is possible that the

<sup>129</sup> Alan G. Wilkinson (1994) 'Cornwall and the Sculpture of Landscape: 1939-1975' in *Barbara Hepworth Retrospective*, Tate Gallery Publications, p 86.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., pp, 88-92.

<sup>131</sup> Ben Nicholson promotes enthusiastically these surgeon series as 'Italian' 'not unlike Mr Giotto in feeling' on 21 August (48) in his correspondence with Ede also on 22 Oct. The intention is to appeal to Ede's preference for Italian art, and for figurative rather than abstract art, with the hope that he will renew purchasing paintings. On Oct 22 Nicholson writes that he is taking Wallis up to London and photos of Hepworth's drawings and Sculpture "Barb.Hep. lots of non-abst. Drwngs which I think are rather up your street & v. much up mine." Kettle's Yard Archive, Ben Nicholson, File10, No.32, dated 31, Dec (47).

<sup>132</sup> See illustration in p 153 in (1994) *Barbara Hepworth Retrospective*.

<sup>133</sup> Illustrated Ibid. About the commission in Penelope Curtis (1994) 'The Artist in Post War Britain', p 92.

<sup>134</sup> She expressed in her letters the ontological change in these words: "In Belsen I can find the heart of things which was missing for our Civilisation before the war. I don't want to share in a crusade of only abstract qualities – but a crusade which is fully religious." TGA 11/5/45.

<sup>135</sup> I postulated on the work being a contemplation of her divorce from Ben, which took place in 1951, in it being a reflective work harking back to happier times in its reference to the profiles images of the early mid 1930s. In a paper presented in Differential Spaces conference in Falmouth College of Arts.

intensive attention that the main celebrations in London overshadowed the local events in the historical chronicling.<sup>136</sup> It could also be that with the later insistence on positioning 'St Ives' as a non-figurative British avant-garde, that phase of figurative abstraction seemed inconsistent and has been relegated with hindsight rationalisation to the category of 'pot-boiler'. In this light it is easy to see Barns-Graham's *Porthleven* as a mainstream expression of the trends that were being followed at that time by the two leading artists in national terms. But in the figuration and size, the painting expresses a new confidence in having found her personal voice.

Electing to paint away from the favoured coast of Penwith, the region that has been subsumed under the name of St Ives, indicates Barns-Graham's tendency to link in her imaging and imagination disparate and distant locations. Just as her earliest paintings of St Ives *Island Sheds 1* and *2*, combined, in her way of thinking, St Ives and the example of Wallis, as well as echoing the colour harmonies of her native Scotland, so too *Porthleven*, a depiction of a town on the South coast, stands for an intentional widening of the range of references for the Penwith Society. Peter Lanyon's upright frame of his *Porthleven*, 1951 (fig 108) stands as a masculine challenge and opposition to Barns-Graham's painting. It is curious that both artists painted the same Victorian harbour town in 1951 (fig 102, 108). Lanyon wrote extensively about the painting being the first one in which he realized he could maintain an image and depict it. But all his notes of the time are not dated and it is impossible to know if there was in his mind a direct competition with and negation of Barns-Graham's paintings. Significantly, the studies that have looked at his painting treat it in a monographic isolated manner, disconnected to the rest of the local art practice of the time.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>136</sup> The minutes of PSAC offer a fascinating and detailed account of the Society's planning, competitiveness with SISA, final need to co-operate, and the activities that were planned and imposed on the whole city, event to the extent of insisting on better displays, and decorations of shops and high street.

<sup>137</sup> Andrew Causey (1987) *Peter Lanyon, Paintings Drawings and Constructions 1937-6*, Withworth Art Gallery, p 20 no.32, and Stephens (2000) pp 73-78.

In *Porthleven*, the lesson learnt from Grindelwald of May 1948 is taken up and examined in another complementary expressive formula, of solids being depicted as fluid, but without their transparent glacier qualities. Flowing lines define both the early Glacier depictions and *Porthleven*; in the former in transparent volumes, in the latter, as opaque. In the *Glacier Series* an overwhelming, almost an engulfing sense is expressed by the high horizon, at the top of square picture format. In *Porthleven*, a sense of instability, even a slight notion of earth movement is being suggested, as if the ground is being imagined in its primordial magma state. An inverse sense of solidity and fluidity are at play in both the paintings: the visible miracle of ice - water solidified - and its opposite, terra firma, reverted back into a state of fluidity. It is an imaginary play of perception, concepts and knowledge.

The themes of solid/fluid and their depiction in a questioning of their reality/ies will recur throughout her work, and they will be manifested in various depictions of ice and water, as well as fluidity of earth surface in either recording geological morphologies, of clay or of cooled down lava, or transforming a landscape into a flowing image by means of her mark-making. Already in 1947 in her *Snow (scene)*, the reversal of vision seemed to be fascinating, but in terms of anecdotal recording and visual tonal novelty. But a year later in her *Glacier Series* she unleashed an expressive configuration, that became central to her imaginative intent though aided along by an internalised reformulation of Gabo-esque constructivism. In the presence of Grindelwald Glacier she found a mimetic justification for the intellectual abstract use of the transparent volumes, practiced and promoted by Gabo. The sensation of exhilaration and fear rendered what was an ideology into an embodied experience, not unlike the vortex that has become Turner's formalesque device for the feeling of the Sublime after his visit to the Alps, one and a half centuries earlier. She recalls the sensation of being surrounded by ice that glistened in different colours with the changes of light directions and intensity. In contrast to this engulfed sensation, *Porthleven* is seen from above, as if the artist were hovering over the city. The experience act on her as a

quest, a desire ~~or~~ imaging intent found its motif by an overwhelming encounter. The representation then of the encounter is not one of accurate depiction of the visible scene, but a conflation of the essence of what she wanted to depict all along but achieved it outside St Ives, or even her native Scotland.

But considering the *Glacier Series* only in terms of its connectedness to the local avant-garde renders the paintings as an object of evidence for the argument of 'major individuals', rather than 'St Ives' as a collection of individuated expressions. By shifting the interpretative focus for the *Glacier Series* from modernist evaluation - on the trajectory of abstraction - to that of a personal, gendered one, a different, additional meaning to the series emerges. During her visit to Grindelwald, Wilhelmina had to decide whether to commit herself to marriage - a decision that she considered as a difficult one to make, fearing that marriage might bring about the loss of her hard won artistic freedom.<sup>138</sup> This emotional pressure and indecision, even fear, can be read as being projected unto the transparent, but still all-enclosing beautiful but menacing environment. In February 1965, fifteen years after the event Wilhelmina wrote about the experience:

The massive strength and size of the glaciers, the fantastic shapes, the contrast of solidity and transparency, the many reflected colours in strong light....this likeness to glass and transparency, combined with solid rough edges made me wish of combine in a work all angels a once, through and all round, as a bird flies, a total experience.<sup>139</sup>

Lanyon's acknowledgement of Gabo is read as homage, Barnes-Graham's as derivative. Lanyon's formulation and art of the period is seen as innovative and is described in isolation, without any reference to Barnes-Graham's work of the time. It is a curious observation that for the first PSAC show, opened on 18 June 1949, Peter Lanyon sent a landscape painted on a square format, measuring 20 x 16, and titled *Portreath* (Fig 109) that, in its use of pale

<sup>138</sup> Interview with W. Barnes-Graham.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted from *St Ives* (1985) p 31. The letter that she wrote she told me in conversation was written in haste and only later she realised that some of its expressions were those that Gabo has used. She therefore asked D. Lewis not to use it in this form. It is still surprising why the same quote has also been used in her 1999-2000 retrospective. Even more curious is that similar expressions are being used to describe Lanyon's work when comparing Garlake's text to Wilhelmina's.



adjacent colour-harmonies, as well as in its composition, echoes Barns-Grahams's *Glacier Series*.<sup>140</sup> Anyone who was one of her close circle of friends and Peter Lanyon, the best man at her wedding, used to visit her in her studio frequently, on which occasions he would have had ample opportunities to see the Glacier paintings. She also exhibited them in various small venues around the town, most significantly in July 1949, at the Downing Bookshop gallery.<sup>141</sup>

The scenario of different artistic expressions and their local (figurative) and national (abstracted) successes, mapped onto the question of differential critical attention and historicisation, begs the question, why did not Wilhelmina insist on her rightful history when the dominant one has been written? The answers can only be guessed at, but might be that with her desire to be seen as working in accordance with the dominant 'modern' rhetoric of that time that with the battle over being at the forefront of artistic dominance raging across the Atlantic, any personal explanation of the work would have been out of question. Admitting to autobiographical content would have yet further reduced the status of the work, especially for a woman artist. The meandering route that women abstractionists had to adopt in the sequence of promise, practice and rationalisation of abstraction entails conflicting processes of rebellion against dominant 'rules', hopes for gender invisibility, bypassing genre association, and finally an internalisation that amounts to collusion with the dominant masculine culture of the avant-garde. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is exemplified in the complex entanglement of abstraction and gender in mid 20<sup>th</sup> century English modernism. Bourdieu's definition of symbolic violence is that kind of "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity."<sup>142</sup> With the wisdom of

<sup>140</sup> Wilhelmina returned in May 1948 from Switzerland, armed with her gouache paintings and drawings from her trip and particularly with those of the *Glacier Series*. At the time Peter was a close friend of David Lewis, and accompanied him travelling St Andrew's for the wedding. The constant visits to each other's studios, as well as the perpetual local café and bookshops shows, make it impossible to imagine that Peter Lanyon did not see the paintings.

<sup>141</sup> *St Ives* (1985) p 106.

<sup>142</sup> P. Bourdieu and L. Wacquant (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Oxford, Polity Press, p 167.

hindsight Wilhelmina often claims that she was very naïve, but also—that this trait also preserved her from getting too embroiled or distracted from her work: Temporal distance, poststructuralist framing, opens up the reductive and autonomous reading of the *Glaciers Series*, or indeed any other series. For any reading that is only along the lines of established privileged discourses forecloses the faceted possibilities of meaning contained in images.

What is an issue in the evaluation of the art of Mellis and Barns-Graham is how styles are being valued. In modernism signature style was an essential criteria of value. In postmodernism this is no longer the case. But reading their art in postmodern criteria seems to be another impasse. From a feminist perspective, however, an appropriation of postmodern criteria in the evaluation of the women painters work not for its presence or absence of 'signature style' but for a continuum of periodic re-emergence of a themes, explorations which were revisited, redefined, and re-examined, by Mellis and Barns-Graham. Rather than the 'signature style' these preoccupations become tropes of the speaking subject. The slippage from image to word and finally to meaning (often thought of by both artists in acoustic terms of sounds and music<sup>143</sup>) is indicated in titles they give to their work. Both of them claim that titles for their paintings are given at a later stage: the completed work is being contemplated and the artist, often with the help of others, allows herself a stream of associations, memories and thoughts to impact a decision concerning a title.<sup>144</sup> An example of transference of embodiment takes place in Barns-Graham's *Cliff Face*, 1952 in which the engulfing rock has the configuration of a veiled monumental face

<sup>143</sup> Mellis claims to be synaesthetic and remembering people's names and addresses in colour harmonies.

<sup>144</sup> Andrew Nicholson in conversation said that both titles and dates of many of his mother's paintings were decided with the family around a table and turning it into a jovial game. Mellis talked at length about how she feels ambivalent about titles. Initially she wanted just to number the works, but then realized that she forgot which was which and gave it up. The problem with titles she said that they direct the viewer in a mode of considering the work. The same sentiments were also expressed by Wilhelmina. Both artists have asked me to join them in thinking about apt titles for their recently completed works on my various visits. It was clear that has been their habit with many visitors to their studio. In Wilhelmina's case my suggestion to name a work Gaia, has in turn become a field of interest and not having heard about the theory previously, she embarked on ardent reading about it, particularly Peter Bunyard's ( ) *The Break down of Climate*. Which indicates that titles are not always backwards projections but often of the moment or even future intents.

that returns the gaze in its suggestive chance image shape (Fig 110). The painting ponders the reciprocal relationship between nature and person, and is picturing a pun by rendering literal the metaphor 'rock face'.<sup>145</sup> The theme of the Glacier reappears in Barnes-Graham's work in 1978 as in *Glacier Knot*, ink drawing, (fig 111) and in *Glacier Snout (pink)*, 1978 (fig 112) and *Glacier*, 1978 or the dramatic *Variation on a Theme*, 1978 a painting in a series that was prompted by looking at iced surface on the lane, that had been cracked by cars driving over it. The painting transposes the event into a monumental scale, not only of the canvas but also in the way the image fills the whole surface and imparts an image less interested in the aspect of scintillating beauty than in the sensation of the drama, as if seeing tectonic plates colliding. The energy of this painting is derived from the sharp-angled blade-like forms, outlined in black, and the use of saturated aqua marines. A similar, though calmer, sense of collision is pictured in *Chasm*, 1980. Chasm can be a topographical description, as well as a description of an emotional state of being. In the history of Romantic landscape paintings it is one of many themes that stand for the notion of the sublime, and as such it connotes the drama and existential tragedy contained in facing the hopelessly uneven scale between nature and human agencies. The viewing point of *Chasm* is undetermined and the meaning of the image changes according to the way the viewer imagines it to be. Visually the forms and their outlines express a calmer resolution of the tensions that were expressed in 1978: now the drama shifted to the oscillation between the possible viewing points from which the painting could be read. It is an ontological shift between being amidst the depiction, embodied within it or detached and aloof.

The theme of land as fluid, as first defined in *Porthleven*, also made periodic reappearances in Barnes-Graham's art, most explicitly in her drawings of locations she visited. Such are the seemingly mimetic drawings of the clay pits in *Chiusure*, 1954 (fig 113), where the

<sup>145</sup> At that period there was a strong tendency of personifying the landscape in various ways. For example John Wells, *Head Landscape*, 1949 (that could be a pun on headland), no.27 in M. Rowe, 1998 catalogue, and Lanyon's *Tall Country and Sea Shore*, 1951 which looks like an abstracted anthropomorphic totem, see ill. 44 in Stephens (2000).

angularity of the pits contrasts with the fluidity of the clay within them. Topography is delineated in terms of the encounter between the workings of nature and humanity. While in *Chiusure*, the inherent fluidity of clay may have lend itself to the depiction of flowing lines in the series of drawings made in *Palinura, Campagna*, the compositional arrangement of the landscape's wavy hills is akin to the late *Wave Series*. Both *Canyon's Palinura, Campagna*, 1955 (fig 114) and *Palinura, Campagna*, 1955. In the 1958 rock drawings of *Formentera, 1958* (fig 115) the selection of rocks is seen as a fossilized wave movements. In this group of drawings, a new energy is expressed by the strong, staccato dark marks, that create outlines of the rocky images, in broken sequences of directions and thickness. A sense of agitation, of dynamics, of desperate search is imparted. The location, as depicted in *Formentera Rocks*, 1958 its habitation relegated to the far background in a thin line that seems like a faraway echo is, set in faint framing to the foreground dark deep black drama. By selecting a marginal view, a close-up of a rock detail, rather than general land-marks of topography, the motif is offering a liberation of the mark-making that takes clear precedence in the expressive configuration.

### The effects of 'success'

It seems<sup>146</sup> that during this period of retrenchement at the Society Barnes-Graham's unconditional support of and loyalty to Hepworth and Nicholson made her an important ally. This together with the roles that her husband played then, first as a secretary to Hepworth in collating material for Herbert Read's book on her, then, in February 1950 Lewis became Honorary Secretary of Penwith society, and in June 1951 until October 1952, he acted as the appointed curator of the society Wilhelmina and David were at the centre of events and

<sup>146</sup> I am using hypothetical language here because of not having had access to all the documents that could corroborate the facts. Barnes-Graham in her suspicious attitude towards writers about her, denied me access to her private papers, though was very generous in discussing with me her art and memories. As for the minutes of PSAC, according to David Brown, they have mysteriously disappeared (in the late 60?) and when they reappeared passages were missing and others tampered with. I could see no proof of this in the microfiche. When I asked for it from Brown he declined and claimed that such a disclosure would land him in lawsuits and he would rather spend his old age in peace. But he did tell me that his source of information had been Denis Mitchell, and implied that the minutes were found again in the possession of Hepworth. After telling me that, he also added that should I write it while he was alive he would deny it as my invention. Sadly he passed away on May 2002. I wonder whether he carried out my suggestion to write it down and keep it somewhere safe.

became for that reason target of hate and lost their friendship with Peter Lanyon. As for Wilhelmina, she remembers these years as a period of dedicated hard work in which she learned about professionalism.

With winning the Penwith Society competition for the local Festival of Britain - for which the judges were John Rothenstein, the Director of the Tate Gallery, and Philip James, the Director of the Art Department of the Arts Council of Great Britain and Alderman Gerald Cock, the ex-Mayor of St Ives- Barns-Graham acquired a new cachet in the positioning rivalry.<sup>147</sup> The painting, *Porthleven* though not painted with the certainty that it would be the one she would send to the competition, was all the same painted with a great amount of preparation and planning. In March she stayed in two different hotels in Porthleven and made many drawings of the place, before she returned to her studio to compose the final version.<sup>148</sup> She stressed the fact that it was a composition from drawing, as well as discussing the painting in terms of being composed. It represents a balance between vision and idea. There are several points of interest concerning the issue of figuration and/or abstraction, both in terms of what can be retrieved from the event, and of how it has been evaluated in the history of 'St Ives'. The first question is, how does *Porthleven* relate to figurative/abstract art at the time, both of Barns-Graham work as well as of others.

In the modernist way of evaluation by way of priority (read as originality) and commitment to abstraction, *Porthleven* has been received and used as a way to mark Barns-Graham's art as romantic figurative,<sup>149</sup> with the implication of it being a relatively reactionary way of painting. The observation of and comments relating to the perceived artistic progression

<sup>147</sup> Though Green (2001) questions whether it was lucky that she handed in a figurative painting rather than an abstract, p125.

<sup>148</sup> Conversation with W. Barns-Graham 28<sup>th</sup> August 2000.

<sup>149</sup> As in the extreme case of Matthew Rowe who when writing about the Crypt Group states after listing the 'founder members': "and later Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Kit Barker, David Haughton, Patrick Heron and Adrian Ryan - all displayed a certain romantic attachment to the landscape rather than say, a commitment to abstraction." (1998) *John Wells*. Exhibition catalogue. London: Tate Gallery Publishing, p 15.

from figurative (traditional) to abstract (avant-garde) can only be taken seriously in the parameters of evaluation of modernist criticism. For while abstraction is an index of 'avant-garde practice' and thus can be applied in evaluating British modernism, the other condition of avant-gardism, that of being at the forefront, is less applicable in a cosmopolitan sense to the national trend. There is therefore an inherent conflict in the claims made in the construction of 'St Ives', and it is just possible that in this frame of reference only monographic writing or a close focus on the local, or even national, scene produces the desired image of being at the forefront. For as Charles Harrison has astutely argued, the whole phenomenon of Ben Nicholson's abstractions and their importation into the psyche of England is in European terms anachronistic. It is pertinent to make this relativism clear here, as, while I do replicate the same kind of argument, I do so not out of a conviction that it is the correct measure for assessing artistic value, but in order to expose inaccuracies and fallacies in the process of attempted historicism, and to indicate the intrinsic bias contained in gendered evaluations. Nicholson's appraisal about his 'return to figurative' illustrates my point. The critics echo his disclaimer that he needed to paint 'pot boilers' during and after the war years. While Hepworth's post-war phase of figurative sculpture, was deemed as meaningful only during the postmodern art historical revived interest in 'the body' as a theme. Lanyon's early oscillation between figuration and abstract is being read as inspired search, while his long battle of ideas against the distinction between the two modes gets wrapped up in the notion of Landscape and his Cornish Identity. But parallel coexisting practices, paths and explorations by either Mellis or Barnes-Graham tend to receive pejorative evaluation. The issue has been argued most pointedly by Douglas Hall in his catalogue article for W. Barnes-Graham's retrospective in 1989<sup>150</sup>, where he makes the distinction between art and art history on the one hand, and the distortions and injustices that arise from the identification of 'important artists' on the other.

<sup>150</sup> Douglas Hall (1989) *W. Barnes-Graham Retrospective 194-1989*. Edinburgh City Art centre. Pp.1,2.

There still remains the question why, if abstraction was so highly valued, did Barns-Graham decide to send a figurative painting, rather than the *Red Pink abstract*, 1951, which she had considered for entry for the 1951 Festival, St Ives competition. The latter was sent instead to the Redfern Gallery exhibition and was acquired by Howard Bliss.<sup>151</sup> But her national reputation was on the rise in 1951 neither with the winning painting in St Ives Festival, nor with her abstract paintings but rather with her variations on the Glacier theme. It became a poison chalice, it earned her acclaim,<sup>152</sup> as evident in Ben Nicholson's letter about her paintings ( Appendix 27), but it also later impacted on the reductive way in which her work was received.

### Scottish Identity

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham's double loyalties to her native Scotland and to St Ives proved to be yet another cause for not giving her her due within 'St Ives'.<sup>153</sup> During her parents lifetime she visited them regularly, since 1960, after her aunt's death she inherited the family house, Balmungo, near St Andrew's and every Christmas she spends a couple of months there. There is ambivalence in assigning one identity to Wilhelmina. I was told by numerous people, including Mike Tooby, the first Curator of the Tate St Ives, 1993-2000, that the reason she was not represented was because she was in Scotland and not down in Cornwall. This shifting of belonging-ness that played on the principle of place(s) and displacement(s) has from the start been a specific framing that was applied to Barns-Graham. It is possibly a result of recognition of her strong Scottish affiliations, as well as of a denial of recognising national regionalism or even racial groupings within 'St Ives'. The generational divides, and the name of St Ives, were the two categories, which delineated the constructions of placing or displacing artists, or so it has been claimed.

<sup>151</sup> She still recalls with pleasure the £70.- that she was paid for it. Considering that she had to manage on £15.- a week as David did not yet earn any income, this seemed a fortune.

<sup>152</sup> *Exhibition of Works by Fifteen Artists and craftsmen from Around St Ives*, 11 January – 10 February, Heal's Mansard Gallery, Tottenham Court Road, 1951.

<sup>153</sup> On many occasions I have been told that she was not in St Ives but in St Andrew's, despite the fact that I interviewed her in St Ives and have just been with her.

In contrast to the heroic narrative of an uphill struggle for recognition, that is repeated in various permutations in relation to men artists, women artists in general, and W. Barns-Graham in particular, seem to be written about only in terms of 'chaperoned reputation', their work is always defined as 'being influenced by' and never either attain a status of maturity or being recognized for their influence on others. As a comprehensive cataloguing of the works of all the protagonists of 'St Ives' does not exist this belittling tendency has become a trait that still survives into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>154</sup> It seems to me that if one insists on finding a Lanyon influence on Barns-Graham's painting, the only possible influence would be the habit of painting in series, though in this respect too, the two paintings of St Ives Island sheds of March 1940 indicate that this was already her tendency, prior to meeting Lanyon. A comparative examination of their paintings during The Crypt years and early PSAC, indicates that Lanyon was influence by Barns-Graham and not the other way round as Artwriting claims. Another example of claims of reversed influences relates to her drawings, in which already as a student at ECA she tended to soften the outlines by rubbing them with her fingers. This device later appeared in Ben Nicholson's drawings, and it was ascribed to him.<sup>155</sup> As for the squat composition of Lanyon's *Portreath*, 1949 (Fig 109), this follows not so much directly from Gabo's example, but indirectly via Barns-Graham's Gaboesque Glaciers.

### PSAC's unfinished business

1960 was the year of transition. Wilhelmina's marriage was breaking up, she went to work in London, 1961-63, and let Simon Nicholson use her Porthmeor Studio. While Wilhelmina was fully active in her artistic involvements in London, from the perspective of 'St Ives' her two years there seemed as being in seclusion, an appraisal that was not equally applied to the

<sup>154</sup> For instance in reviews of her first solo exhibition at the Tate St Ives her work was considered as being influenced by Terry Frost, while he arrived at St Ives 6 years after her in 1946, and then left for his art studies. Neither his very sporadic presence in St Ives nor his generational difference (in terms of professionalism) deterred the critics to see him as the innovator and her as the follower.

<sup>155</sup> Information from Bill Gear, a fellow student at ECA with Wilhelmina and a lifelong friend, in conversation with Clare Stacey, one of the Art First Gallery directors.



various long absences of her male colleagues. Her absence meant that she was not part of the final, 1961, wave of resignations from PSAC. The discontented artists, Alexander Mackenzie, Denis Mitchell and Michael Snow, wrote a public letter, dated 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1961 to the Chairman of PSAC after a General Meeting on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> February. They alleged that:

Criticism of the Society in the past has usually centred round allegations that its affairs were too much dominated by a small group of influential members, always on the Committee, and that these members, whilst publicly proclaiming the necessity of strengthening the Society by welcoming new blood have at the same time seemed quite unwilling to relinquish power and let young people share control.

As a result Hepworth resigned from public office at PSAC. As for Wilhelmina the divorce, her aunt's death, inheritance of Balmungo and acquisition of her home/studio in the refurbished Barnaloft, all of which brought about a change of life-style and a new phase in her life and sense of greater stability. In 1958 she visited the Balearic Islands, which reinforced her renewed interest in religion, as well as excited her imagination for their energy and freedom. The themes that she explored then were revisited later in 1991 when she visited Barcelona. Her passionate response to Barcelona and to Tapies and Miro's paintings there, can be seen both as an extension of her involvement with European modernism, but also as a new formulation of Christian symbolism and abstraction as exemplified in *Spanish Island, Under Over*, (fig 117) and other paintings of the time and mood.

### **Barnes-Graham the artist: an overview**

Rather than revisiting Barnes-Graham's art from imposed category of binary opposition of abstraction/figuration, it would be more accurate to describe her work in terms that are integral and internal to her total life work. First, is her continuous concern with painting in relation to patterning; the seemingly absence of a signature style in her diverse expressions and series, which in turn impacted her public reception. Modernist readings considered the variety in her work as a sign of dependency, especially in relation to the glacier theme, which significantly has been defined in relation to a visit to Gröndelwald, away from St Ives.

Wilhelmina likes to repeat two different texts when attempting to explain her art. They are diametrically different; one is a personal, primordial memory of childhood, the other – a totally formalist, autonomous well-defined and memorised explanation. The fact that both stories have appeared in print is an indication not only of the importance that Wilhelmina attaches to them but more significantly points at ways to understand the reasons for and the expression of her artistic expression. Whenever I, and others, ask her when she began to paint abstract painting Wilhelmina, rather than giving a date or period, invariably recounts a childhood memory.<sup>156</sup> As a very young girl she was in the habit of drawing with dark crayons a pattern of interlocking rectangles or triangles in primary colours. Sometimes she would colour them in. On one of the family's train trip from St Andrew's to her father's family estate in the West she busied herself in making one of these drawings. A woman, who sat next to her inquired about the meaning of these, and was promptly answered by Wilhelmina that they were 'secret rooms'. It turned out that the woman was a member of staff at Glasgow Art School: she encouraged her and showed appreciation in front of Wilhelmina's uninterested family. The event became part of the family's folklore.<sup>157</sup>

The answer of 'secret rooms' is significant beyond its quality of amusing anecdotal family memory. The childhood memory can be thought of in many ways. First and foremost in relation to the role that art has for Wilhelmina as a refuge from and a means of cutting herself off from her family, even as a means behind which she hides what she perceives as vulnerability or aspects of herself that can be misunderstood or misconstrued. It is an early sign of a life in which art would become a bone of contention with her father, as well as a reason for her to live away from her native Scotland, and it has remained a constant element in her life. The other aspect of the story is the idea that abstract is not non-figurative, but that the figuration is not shared but personal, and is not readily accessible for decoding by

<sup>156</sup> The precise age of Wilhelmina is difficult to ascertain. Lynne Green dates the event to c.1924. In an interview with Wilhelmina on 24.5.96 she told me it happened when she was 8-9 years old.

<sup>157</sup> Wilhelmina repeated this episode on several occasions to me, and recently has also been printed in Lynne Green (2000) p 15.

others. Evidently, it would be wrong to attach to these memories as they might be not real memories, but one that was internalised because of its repetition, and later used for her own purposes. When Wilhelmina tells it, there is no doubt that the story is used by her as a means of presenting herself as an intuitive and innate abstractionist, even before she studied art, let alone heard about modernist abstractions. Significantly, I have never succeeded in finding out from her at what point and why she began painting modernist, non-figurative paintings in St Ives.

The second explanation that Barnes-Graham gives when asked about the meaning of the recent abstract paintings is a well prepared text, which she has dictated to me from her pre-prepared written statement. Barnes-Graham's contribution to a recent publication, which is an abbreviated version, is an expression of the autonomy of work of art, almost a personal credo of formalism:

Recent phase a celebration of life, and immediate expression of energy, vitality, joy, with an element of risk, the unexpected.

Colour as colour, texture as texture, so blue is not sky, green is not grass, but is an object in itself, so that it is itself.

The feel of the work, completed when the idea of this feel has been fulfilled.

Frequently using primary colour, each can suggest a shape, inside oneself and remembering the importance of structure and simplicity. Avoiding the purely decorative.

Real space has its own value, not to be associated with previous centuries of emphasis on the illusion of space.

Brush strokes can be slim, thin, fat, textured, light, aggressive, risky, delicate or unexpected, daring or quiet, with their own energy or life and exuberance.<sup>158</sup>

All sections but for the first one, address formalism. And yet the framing of the artistic practice and expression within the specificity of her mood and state of mind, as expressed in the first paragraph, give the text a different inflection, an experiential and personal expressive content, that wrenches it out and away from pure autonomy. But as in 'secret rooms', she refuses here to disclose meaning in a mimetic manner. The precise point of

<sup>158</sup>In Penny Florence and Nicola Foster (2000) *Differential Aesthetics: Art practices, philosophy and feminist understandings*, Ashgate, Aldershot, Burlington USA, Singapore, Sydney, p 29.

reference remains unknown to the viewer, and on many occasions probably to herself too.<sup>159</sup>

This statement of an artist in her ninetieth year contains elements that were there in her childhood, for her it became a meaningful memory, that has since been frequently retold and made significant. The main emphasis of the statement points to a strict autonomous formalist stance, which considers only surface, brush strokes and the interconnectedness of colours space and forms. There is a circuitous flow from idea, art during its making, and distance evaluation all in relation to the artist's emotional makeup. The 'secret' of her early childhood is still with her, but is being articulated differently. Being free of any familial constraints, she can finally in her old age find total freedom in her vocation, and though physically she is more fragile, emotionally and psychologically she experiences a new sense of freedom.<sup>160</sup> This sense of freedom expressed through the word 'joy' might seem to stand in stark contrast to her physical ailments (both chronic ill health as well as that of physical fragility that comes with age) and to her outspoken, at times confrontational, personality. It even rings more awkward at the coincidence of that sense of liberation despite the sense of loss with her mother's death in 1989. The epistemological meaning of 'joy' for Barnes-Graham was expressed in its most complex context when just two months short of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday she discussed the Israel-Palestinian conflict with me not only on an ethical and political level but also mostly about its negation of joy. Wilhelmina, despite being at the time still with stitches from her eye operation, which prevented her from painting, and just recovering from chicken pox, asserted her love and joy of life, and how in her view the most pernicious aspect of war is its negation of life and joy.<sup>161</sup> Old age's worst aspect is for her the sense of loneliness and the departure of many lifelong friends. But the ability to go on painting is a privilege, liberating and a vocation that for her is the essence of pain(t)ful introspection as well as manifestation of joy. With this meaning of joy, not only the complete composition, but even each single brushstroke, are imbued with an

<sup>159</sup> W. Barnes-Graham gets very agitated when she is being pressed in interviews or conversations about either precise meanings or even forcing her to recollect past contexts.

<sup>160</sup> Conversations with the artist.

<sup>161</sup> Phone conversation on 20.4. 2002.

epistemological meaning. The single brushstroke, as it refers to her artistic activity and commitment; it is a distinct world, as if marked by colourful outlines, whose purpose is to create these secret spaces and find an expressive freedom. The process of making art, is, for her, conceptually and expressively a world cut off and autonomous from other aspects of daily life. Thus, artistic values and subjectivity are interlocked and interdependent in an imaginary and metaphorical way: they contain a web of concealment, of retreat and within this space, she finds her creative freedom.

The anachronism of Barns-Grahams' statements in relation to both their historical and personal perspectives reveal a web of contradictions, resistance to cultural changes, and contradictions, that can and indeed has been misunderstood, and has consequently contributed to her misrepresentation. It is an interesting observation that the extreme opposition of approaches to biographical and contextual readings of art during modernism and postmodernism have established a hegemony of appraisal that denied an appropriate discursive niche for Barns-Graham and other artists of her kind (Prunella Clough, for instance comes to mind). With the extreme autonomous claims of high modernism, and the extremes of confessional, even desirable scandalous disclosure of postmodernism, an in-between position like that of Barns-Graham fails to fit any of these canons.

Different levels of biographical content are evident in her oeuvre. On one level, much of the work delineates, charts, and is a trace of her travel through life, in terms of places and emotions. For that reason, the distinction between figurative and abstract is not helpful in attempting to an understanding of her dual expressions. Only few out of the hundreds of her paintings have titles or contain precise biographical content. Many landscapes are of either her living environment, as those of Scotland or of Penwith, or of locations of proximity, such as the Isles of Scilly. Islands as geographic entities and as metaphors are repeated in her work in many guises. Another group of work is of landscapes executed while on holidays,

or based on sketches and memories of holidays. This began early in her student years with the paintings of the abbey of Iona; as in *Sketch of Iona Cathedral*, 1935 (fig 119) as well as her *Glacier Series* resulting from her sketches during her holiday in 1948 to Gründelwald, Switzerland. Later, in post-war years, drawing and paintings from Italy, Sicily, Barcelona Balearic Islands, Lanzarote the Orkney Islands all are expressions of places visited and remembered. Other themes repeated in her work are relating to the properties of water, waves, ice in either anthropomorphic shapes, at times womb-like, or on occasions as sharp blue splintering surfaces. Elemental forces, such as wind, fire, light or even galaxies are all topics painted and revisited or themes for series of paintings.

In her recent *Time Series*, which she began in early 2000, and in which she contemplates time as an abstract concept by giving it figuration in various verbal expressions of time such as the titles: *Quiet Time, Another Time, Just in Time and Cardinal Time*. Other works are related to the same preoccupation of hers such as *Walk About Time*, etc. the mood and colours are more subdued and sombre than in her *Scorpio Series* expressing a contemplative mood rather than an outburst of energy and optimism. These titles that can be interpreted as expressions of either old age, or of the new millennium are actually given surprisingly physical explanations by Wilhelmina. For instance, on one occasion she offered an unprompted explanation of one of the paintings of the series as a semi literal charting of the daily path of her walk in the garden at Balmungo, rather than relating to it in terms of mood or epistemology. The colour harmonies of brown and purple referred to the colours of autumnal vegetation, and particularly significant was the circular path around the garden, represented, rather than depicted, in the print, as a white spiral. Spirals she connected with D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's *On Growth and Form*, originally published in 1942. She

remembers that when she visited Brancusi, he explained to her his feelings about his place in the universe, by drawing her a spiral.<sup>162</sup>

In even more recent series of acrylic paintings she made to the memory of her life-long friend John Wells (early 2000), *Red Painting*, 1957, a painting of rage, when her marriage fell apart, a painting dedicated to Winifred Nicholson, who helped and encouraged Wilhelmina to keep painting as a healing process after her divorce.<sup>163</sup> She also paints in response to current political atrocities, such as the recent unrest in Bosnia (fig 118).<sup>164</sup> In most instances the content, that is anecdotal content of the paintings is left undisclosed. Her refusal to reveal the personal or otherwise content of her work probably is an outcome of her education, of etiquette at home, and of modernism's learnt rhetoric of abstraction, but above all probably a fear that any explanation will be taken out of context and reinterpreted. What irks Wilhelmina now is what she perceives as a loss of control over her own life story when she contests the narratives presented in the dominant Artwriting.

On a personal level two factors had the greatest damaging impact on Wilhelmina: her relationship with her authoritarian father, and her disillusionment after her divorce from David Lewis. Allan Barns-Graham, refusing to agree to his daughter's wish to study art, sent her to a domestic science school, in order to prepare her for a true feminine role of managing a home and family. Now, in her nineties she ponders whether his objection did not do much for her determination to study art and for her resolute professional commitment. But Allan Barns-Graham had also a determining effect on Wilhelmina's choice of place of living. While initially, there is no question that St Ives was a poor second best choice of place to go

<sup>162</sup> It is interesting to note that in recent postmodern, scientific, and visual syntax, the spiral has made a come back both within chaos theory and as a metaphor in Daniel Liebeskind's proposed new façade for the north entrance of the Victoria and Albert museum.

<sup>163</sup> During her solo exhibition in Tate St Ives 1999, she also insisted that this painting with another one related to it, had to do with the colourful dresses that the various ethnic inhabitants of Leeds were wearing. The two, explanations, are not necessarily mutually excluding.

<sup>164</sup> *Bosnia* (fig 118) was painted after hearing about the horrific destruction of the former Yugoslavia. She waved copyrights and gave Zljka Mudrovic permission to reproduce the image on a card as charity to raise funds for the relieve of Bosnian refugees.

for her Travelling Scholarship, she did not like it initially, left only to return and then settle in St Ives. But there was another added bonus in being at the other end of the British Isles; it put a geographical distance between herself and her demanding father. Wilhelmina's response to him is ambivalent at best but contradictory and possibly confused at most times. In spontaneous statements she expresses criticism expressing her unresolved anger. Taking this anger into a more extreme level, it can be even equated to an imaginary patricide.<sup>165</sup> But at the same time she is outraged when this fraught relationship is being made public in print. In a way she regards the issue something she will disclose in the confines of personal, one to one, conversation, but considers it as a breach of confidence when it is repeated outside these confines.<sup>166</sup> Both decorum and hindsight reconsideration of her father's motives make her also protect his actions.<sup>167</sup> Her strict Victorian upbringing, which was already old-fashioned, is deeply entrenched in her sense of privacy and during this age of extreme confessional 'outings' of people's life, she still persistently adheres to what she considers to be a decent decorum of non-disclosure of private life. However, the ambiguity, contradictions and often concealment of biographical data as well as meaning of art often merge in her conversation, and undoubtedly also are an outcome of her modernist way of explaining things as self-evident and without any additional references.<sup>168</sup> In her art she

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<sup>165</sup> In this respect, it is interesting to compare her attitude to her parents to that of Louise Bourgeois. Both artists even in their eighties and after having attained greater recognition than at any other stage of their lives, still carry within them an unresolved anger against their fathers, to an extent that their mothers rarely get a mention. Both artists also see much of the energy of their work either containing or being a function of that rage. Barnes-Graham often muses whether her father's persistent objection did not spur her in a more determined way towards her vocation as an artist. This comparison is my own, but prompted by Wilhelmina's likening her own old age artistic output to that of Degas and Picasso, whose exhibition she saw and felt for a sympathetic understanding.

<sup>166</sup> She responded in the same mode of criticism to Checkland's book *Ben Nicholson: Vicious Circles of his Art*, on the ground that much of the personal disclosures have nothing to do with his art and are purely prurient. It is also the reason for her destruction of many of her past letters and documents, as well as her refusal to let me have any access to those or her diary.

<sup>167</sup> Her brother, Patrick Barnes-Graham, pointed out to her the paternal concern that, he maintained, were the basis of their father's over protective attitude to Wilhelmina because of her weakness and tendency to get various chest infections. Patrick also pointed out to Wilhelmina that though Allan's possibly misconceived actions that have made life difficult for her artistic career, were in effect his way of expressing paternal protective attitude.

<sup>168</sup> This is particularly relevant to issues of family matters, such as her sister, brother and father in particular.



finds an activity and expression that diverts her attention from the past. The act of painting — she stated on numerous occasions, is an act of affirmation of the present moment.<sup>169</sup>

Barns-Graham's verbal rhetoric of and for abstraction must be considered beyond the anecdotal value of the story and its strategic intentions. Even now, in her nineties, she is an avid reader and curious to seek out and read material about modern art.<sup>170</sup> This curiosity made her read as a student the then new and avant-garde publication *Circle*, which I assume must have been one of the earliest English articulations she came across about non-figurative art.

In addition to Wilhelmina's recollection of these years there is also another evidence as to how her generation valued what either Gabo or Ben Nicholson had to say about abstraction or constructivism. Gabo's farewell speech did not contain so much of a personal farewell as a credo of constructivism. John Wells deemed it important enough to take notes and then record them.<sup>171</sup> There is no doubt that such a meticulous process of note taking and rewriting was done for future references and for the purpose of repeated reading and consideration. Wilhelmina's own statements, John Wells' and others' comments and writings are indication to the degree of respect that Gabo and Ben Nicholson commanded among the group of 'moderns' in St Ives. It is important to stress the fact that Barns-Graham in this respect was not an exception but that she shared the general attitude, even though historicism will highlight this mainly in relation to her work, and by implication use this to deny her originality. But she also insists with pride on the events that led to the Crypt Group, a brave effort of the young moderns to create a sub-group, daring not invite Ben and Barbara, 'the king and queen' of the moderns then. Wilhelmina's text therefore has to be

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<sup>169</sup> Phone conversation on 5.1.01.

<sup>170</sup> For instance, declaring herself to be against feminism, we embarked on a discussion after which she was keen to borrow books and literature by feminist art historians. Her various encounters with other feminists in recent years has, I believe brought about a reformulation of her view of her professional past.

<sup>171</sup> John wells notes of Gabo's farewell speech in TGA 8718.4.

considered as a metonymy to her biography and as a refuge at one and the same time. Life for her is encapsulated by art making, the process becomes the essence of living for her.

Surviving oils, studies and designs from Barns-Graham's student years point to her early experimentations to emulate modernist examples. Cézanne is an early source of inspiration as evident in *Still-life, Pink*, c.1936,<sup>172</sup> or *Still-life with Pewter Plate*, c. 1928 (fig 120), or primitivism as in *Episcopal Church, Aviemore*, 1938, (fig 121) and in *The Man in the Red Chair*, c.1934<sup>173</sup> or else postimpressionist portraits and scenes. She was schooled in appreciation of Cézanne and Rembrandt. She was introduced to them initially by Alan Barns-Graham, her older cousin and then interested in painting.<sup>174</sup> French Modernism was admired and appropriated both directly and indirectly via its interpretation by veteran Scottish painters/teachers as Peploe, Giles and Feurguson,<sup>175</sup> and her interest in the French/Scottish connection is there to be seen in the poster hanging prominently in her studio in the Crypt Group meeting photograph (Appendix 32). Other, student paintings indicate use of rich broken colour *Sketch of Iona Cathedral*, (fig 119). Barns-Graham's commitment to portraiture, after graduation can be seen as an attempt to follow modernist examples of the genre, but also as a means to accommodate her father's insistence that she found a means of generating income. Early portraits painted in St Ives such as *Sketch Portrait of Henry Crowe Esq.*, 1939,<sup>176</sup> painted with expressive paint application, in short rhythmic *touches* that heighten the paint's viscosity and use of saturated pigments, often in unmixed hues, are a balanced image of resemblance as well as Fauve-like expressive qualities.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>172</sup> See fig 15 in Green (2001) p 52.

<sup>173</sup> Location unknown, Green (2001) fig 8.

<sup>174</sup> He returned to New Zealand where he painted according to Wilhelmina in conversation 24.5.96.

<sup>175</sup> The artist, 24.5.96.

<sup>176</sup> See fig 16 in Green (2001) p 53.

<sup>177</sup> Portraiture was not only a means to generate income, but had also a personal significance for Wilhelmina, as a portrait she painted of her brother, at the end won her father over to the fact that she had talent. Communication with the artist.

While early paintings indicate training in French modernism of figurative themes, her surviving exercises in design, rather than her oils, are truly indicative of things to come in Wilhelmina's professional life. Two of these exercises – a poster and a textile design – reveal an early predilection to two aspects: a simplification that derives from Art Deco visual vocabulary,<sup>178</sup> and to decorative patterned all-over compositions. Both examples, despite their difference in their colour harmonies, indicate not only an overall sense of patterning that would become one of her repeated artistic devices, but also the sense of a dynamic movement across and beyond the frame of the depicted field.

The consideration of her student's years is important for two reasons: for its indication that many elements, ascribed to her art as being prompted and inspired by St Ives or by artists working there, were already her preoccupation as a student, prior to her arrival at St Ives. From that observation, it follows that her output once in Cornwall was of a mature, stature of taking risks, experimentation by way of cyclic progression of addressing new formats and then assimilating them with old concerns of hers. Secondly, a consideration of her student work, together with her later work, indicates that rather than looking for a signature style in her work, another mode of evaluation needs to be applied to her art, one that emerges from the work rather than being imposed externally. Her art ought to be considered in terms of repeated philosophical pictorial preoccupations, such as order and disorder; spatial recession and volumes' projection into the viewer's space; stasis within and movement across the pictorial surface; and more. In such a consideration,<sup>179</sup> the role of series painting and cyclic revisiting become the significant expressive impetus of her art and the issue of 'Signature style' fades and becomes irrelevant.

<sup>178</sup> For Art Deco see Bevis Hillier (1968) *Art Deco in the 20s and 30s*, London, Herbert Press.

<sup>179</sup> Which still awaits to be done.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I argued and brought evidence to the degree to which Barnes-Graham was an active and integral part of the various stages of 'St Ives', with a constant original and public and personal meaningful artwork. It might be pertinent then, to repeat and question again why does she then consider herself to be a 'lone wolf'? It might reflect her disillusionment at having thought herself to be 'one of the boys', and then finding that from the mid 1975 (Heron's unpublished article) on, her presence and art have been expunged, and none of the surviving 'boys' nor the critics were compelled to consider her on equal footing. Thus, in the 1985 catalogue and subsequent critical writing not only was she not perceived as an active and *equal* part of the activities even when she offered her evidence or memories they repeatedly were (and still are) being ignored. Surprisingly, her memories are not doubted when she is being called to impart her memories about her men colleagues. Therefore, her self-image as a 'lone wolf' becomes a complex one. As a woman, Scot, and with diploma, amongst the men, having given up various aspects of family life (in Scotland, marriage, possibly even motherhood) defying the 'natural' role of women, she did not fit into any professional or private societal framework. Now, at the age of 90, the final loneliness is that despite the relative recognition, she thinks it is too late for her to set the record right and is frustrated by not being allowed to have a say or some impact on what her life was/is about. 'Chaperoned reputation' that reduced her independent expression, her voice, in terms of influences, now reappears in a new guise, that of being deprived of ownership over her life-story, in a sense over her subjectivity.

By 1950 Barnes-Graham's acclaim was such that she featured in the first post-war exhibition in London of St Ives 'moderns' in January 1951. In the same year she also was invited to exhibit at the inaugural exhibition of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (Herbert Read was its President and co-founder) *1950: Aspects of British Art* for which she chose to send *Glacier (Blue Cave)*, 1950. As Lynne Green points out, there her painting was hanging

together with works by Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Richard Hamilton, Patrick Heron, Eduardo Paolozzi and William Turnbull. Lynne writes:

That Barns-Graham was included, and Robert Adams, Francis Bacon, Reg Butler, Lucian Freud, and Peter Lanyon were amongst those listed as excluded (largely through lack of space), indicates the level of critical appreciation of her work.<sup>180</sup>

Indeed, the list points to her being recognised as a veteran accomplished non-figurative artist relevant outside the confines of 'St Ives'. The grouping also exemplifies how fluid and unfixed the grouping was at that time (Appendix 34 for various group-configurations in post-war London art world). Just like her dual commitment to Scotland and St Ives impacted the critical appraisal of dismissing her from her Cornish commitment, her involvement with many of the configurations in St Ives and outside it, has been seen as irrelevant in the context of 'St Ives' Artwriting.

This is not the platform for a chronological survey of Barns-Graham's work, and indeed I did not intend to attempt it. Instead I aimed to address a more general consideration of some of Barns-Graham traits that are either pivotal or cyclic or in her art and identify her visual tropes in the context of 'St Ives' artists and chronology to read her as one of the more individual artists working there and unlike anyone else repeatedly reinventing her work, despite her eternal returns to many of her initial quests.

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<sup>180</sup> Green, p 126.

## Chapter 5 –

**Conclusion: the gendered construction of ‘Symbolic Capital’**

In this thesis I argued that ‘St Ives’ has been a construct of the late 1970s finding its final formulation in the 1985 exhibition. The narration of the war years in Penwith confers on the art activities some of the heroic drama of the Second World War, but it is in the post war years that the artistic community in St Ives, first underwent most significant changes, in dynamic attempts of self-positionings. The decade of the 1950s was the heyday of the artistic activities with St Ives becoming the centre for collectors, curators, art administrators and artists alike. Between the 1950s and the late 1970s the collective dynamics of the artists in St Ives waned until Patrick Heron took up its story while David Brown organized another story in his 1977 exhibition. Between the mid/late 1970s and 1985 various formulations were proposed and most of them were combined in the codifying exhibition. All the scenarios marginalized women painters, though of the various plans Brown’s was the most inclusive.

I have illustrated what were the categories and premises under which ‘St Ives’ has been constructed in 1985, and in turn examined the life and work of women painters, mainly Barns-Graham and Mellis, within the same categories. In my view, what emerges is that within all the categories - of being in the right place at the right time, of being active within the group, of practising the dominant styles and themes, in being original and prolific, and in conducting a committed professional life – the women painters were not only equals but often superior to their same-age, men colleagues. And yet, personal aspect attracted detrimental evaluations. Their output is still always read in terms of being either dependent on or second to men artists; their decisions and actions are being narrated in a way that denies them independence and is forever ‘chaperoned’ by men. Travels and work away from St Ives is seen as positive in men’s careers, as absence and relegation in women.

Structures of marginalizations can be divided into 1. The appraisal of the works themselves. 2. Evaluation of the communal involvement. 3. Institutional (museal) appraisal. 4. General, cultural structures of asymmetrical attributions of value whereby the tolerance of pluralistic expressions of modes of abstraction are acceptable and rationalized in men's art are both being misread and dismissed when painted by women artists. For women abstraction offered not only a new way of expressing themselves but also a means to eschew gender (mis)recognition. The different categories, needless to say, are interconnected and combine to influence the overall consideration of an artist. It is nevertheless, I maintain, instructive to divide these and analyse in what way each of these operates and have therefore discussed these in separate-but-linked sections. In way of summing up, I would like to revisit in a succinct way the issues relating to the sections listed above. In relation to the appraisal of the works I will discuss briefly the issue of 'Signature Style' as a modernist criteria for excellence. I will say nothing more about the communal and institutional aspects as I have argued these extensively in the body of the thesis. But for the general cultural structures of bias I will sketch out points that I think inform biased evaluation, such as naming politics; Women's biographical moments of rupture; regional identities. I will then sum up with the open-ended question what strategies are available today to women modernists for their self positioning.

### **Signature style and the speaking subject**

Modernism perceived a signature style as the trope of individuality; the more idiosyncratic the style the stronger its indication of the personality. In the art of Mellis and Barns-Graham, rather than equating style with a speaking subject, it is more relevant to look for the subject as emerging in various configurations throughout their lives and work rather than impose on their art either a reductive exposition or external masculine expectations. Should the absence of style be interpreted as lack of identity, as an inability to reach a stage of creative maturity, as the modernists would have us believe? An alternative reading would

be to interpret the pluralism that emerges from their work as a positive aspect as indeed it is valued in postmodern art. Feminist options in reading art enable not only in offering meanings but also in the understanding of the conditions and concerns of women artists. Masculine avant-gardes and critics have defined Modernism. Women's art, even when becoming part of an avant-garde contains additional aspects specific to the gender conditions and to the personal contexts of the artist. While these aspects are incorporated into the understanding of men artists the art of women painters needs to be framed and understood in different ways. For instance, while abstraction does serve both men and women as a way to explore the means of art and thought, for women, it has also the added benefit of hiding their gender and possibly being valued for their merit rather than for their sex. In this context Barns-Graham's experience of 1951 Heals exhibition of artists from St Ives is revealing of how even when her colleagues perceived her as an equal, it was a different story for collectors in London. A collector, who liked her painting and bought it, was dismayed when he learned to know that 'Willie' was not a man but a woman painter. On realising that he could not change his mind and return the painting, he all the same insisted that she retouched a patch of colour at the centre of the painting. She did so but not without being upset at the humiliation, as she saw it, as she is certain that such a request would have never been made to a man artist. Wilhelmina, recognising the precarious balance of women artists and their artistic reputation, complied with the request, but its bitter memory remained with her to this day. By way of example it illustrates the dialectics of being a modernist, abstractionist artist, having to half-hide one's gender, accommodate collectors and still find a way to retain integrity, a precarious balance that is imposed only on women to that extent. All these have to come into account and be part of the process of reading the work of art within its delicate and contextual dependency that either incorporates the art into a symbolic system or else makes it slip away from and out of the economy of meanings.



## Naming politics

The implications and the politics of naming has been observed by Gertrude Stein in her autobiography *The Autobiography of Alice Toklas*:

Everyone called Gertrude Stein Gertrude, or at most Mademoiselle Gertrude, everyone called Picasso Pablo and Fernande Fernande and everybody called Guillaume Apollinaire Guillaume and Max Jacob Max but everyone called Marie Laurencin Marie Laurencin.<sup>1</sup>

Quoting this paragraph, Elliott and Wallace observe and discuss the nature of naming politics in left bank Paris in relation to gender and modernism. Naming politics can, they argue, “work both obviously – as with the patronym, which Lacan has punningly labelled *non/nom du père* and which confers identity and subjectivity in patriarchy – and subtly, to position women within a complicated network of cultural relations and cultural capital.” More specifically, Marjorie Perloff draws out the distinctions relating to Marie Laurencin’s naming:

The Picasso-Apollinaire cenacle did not know how to assimilate the woman painter in their midst. To call her ‘Marie’ would be to equate her with Fernande the mistress or Gertrude the hostess, and so she is called Marie Laurencin even as it is still customary today to talk of Joyce, Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf, or, for that matter, or Hemingway and Gertrude Stein.<sup>2</sup>

The differential naming of women artists that indicates the absence of space and language within which they can be comfortably located within their collegial avant-gardes only indicates one facet of asymmetry and cultural awkwardness. While Wallace and Elliott have looked at the naming ‘unease’ of how to locate and name women of undisputed reputation, another set of conditions is manifested in relation to more marginalized women artists as Beckett and Cherry have observed in relation to women Vorticists. They observe the indecisive spelling of the names of the women artists,<sup>3</sup> which is shared by other women artist in their as yet ‘unfixed’ spelling convention as for instance that of Vasilief’s surname.<sup>4</sup> In the artworld as in western societies women’s (sur)names are not constant, and reflect male lineage.

<sup>1</sup> Stein 1960, (original publication 1933) p 60, quoted in Elliott and Wallace (1994) p102.

<sup>2</sup> Perloff (1988), p 68, quoted from Elliott and Wallace (1994) p 102.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Beckett and Debrah Cherry (1998) ‘Modern Women, Modern Spaces: Women, metropolitan culture and Vorticism’ pp.36-54 in K. Deepwell (ed) *Women Artists and Modernism*,

<sup>4</sup> Nedira Yakir (2000) ‘The True Colour of the Ecole de Paris’, in *Europa*, Intellectbooks, on line magazine of the universities of Bristol and Exeter.

### Naming politics in 'St Ives'

Winifred changed her maiden surname Roberts to Nicholson after the marriage. The name Nicholson, brought along both a dynastic responsibility but also a specific complexity of identity, because of the eminence of William Nicholson in the English domain of the art world of his time. In her case the evolution of her surname politics is closely related not so much to her artistic output but to a greater extent to her self-imposed role of a supportive wife to Ben. With the birth of their three children, she became increasingly confined to domestic life in Banks Head, Cumbria, but this did not deter her from acting as the chair of The Seven and Five Society (1929-) while Ben gradually moved to London, where he busied himself with strategic positioning. Their relative divergent paths of publicity became even further extreme after Ben's involvement with Barbara Hepworth. It was this that eventually drove Winifred to live in Paris, where she was both distant enough from the painful realities as well as at the centre of modernism, into which she threw herself wholeheartedly. When in 1936 the planning of Circle was in its full swing, Winifred was asked to contribute but publishing her article not under 'Nicholson'. Winifred dutifully chose her maternal side surname of Dacre.

The historical irony of the artistic and personal triangle of Winifred, Ben and Barbara is that while historicism always couples the names of Ben and Barbara with the Parisian avant-garde, it has actually been Winifred, who is always being presented as a most English, reactionary artist, who lived in Paris, mingled with the avant-garde but in documents and personal letters seems to have introduced Ben Nicholson to the Parisian avant-garde ideas. Winifred's choice to adopt her mother's maternal surname, as if symbolically compensating for a loss in her self-identification, by reinstating and amplifying another lineage another aspect of her identity that had been erased with marriage and taking on the name Nicholson. But while the selection of Dacre as surname might have had positive private compensational aspects for Winifred, in the public English arts arena, it was yet an additional contributor to

her distance from the audience. Winifred's decision to change for a time her surname to Dacre meant that the reception of her writings and paintings has to a certain degree been equally fragmented.<sup>5</sup> Barbara Hepworth, by contrast, though less established, as an artist at the time she met Ben Nicholson, preferred to be known by her maiden name. In that context it is significant that throughout the minutes of PSAC she is being referred to as Miss Hepworth (Appendix 30).

W. Barns-Graham and M. Mellis indicate awareness and self-defining identities in relation to the politics of names but in different ways and configuration from that that Winifred Nicholson has subjected herself to. Margaret, who throughout her students' years was known as Peggy has decided to become Margaret and insisted on it religiously after graduating from Edinburgh College of Arts. Her awareness of the potent symbolism contained in her name comes to the fore in her 'Saints Series'. So while she reverted back to her first name from a nickname, she kept for professional use her maiden surname Mellis all her life. Barns-Graham expresses an ambiguous attitude to her names. From both lineage and Scottish identity perspectives she values her hyphenated name. But in St Ives artworld a hyphenated name, that indicates affiliation to the upper classes, was less welcome in the bohemian, working class ethos of war-years and Post War St Ives. Sven Berlin coins for her a pejorative name in his *Dark Monarch*, in which both her Scottish origin and her hyphenated name are being targeted for ridicule. But the name 'Willie' whereby she is universally known, she relishes. Wilhelmina was a family name that she shares with her mother and its diminutive 'Willie' came out of a need to differentiate between them. But it proved to have also some professional advantages, in that first-time collectors could not be biased against her work on the ground of gender.

Naming politics is a manifestation of the patriarchal way that women were seen in relation to masculine dynastic lineage, and the choices that women modernists made in relation to

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<sup>5</sup> While I cannot here prove this point empirically, it all the same is indicative that I have come across numerous people who have not made the connection between the 'two Winifreds'.

retaining or changing names has implications about first, their attempts to take control over their destinies and identities, but also about the inherent unstable state of women's subjectivity and by implication their professional standings.

### Women Artists Self-positioning Today

It is a sad reality that even many feminist art historians and critics feel a greater affinity with postmodern women artists than with modern.<sup>6</sup> It is understandable that the critical aims of postmodern practice support the same political agenda that is the foundation of postmodern women commentators.<sup>7</sup> This leaves the responsibility of positioning either to the artists themselves or to various expository agents, namely, galleries and museums. While Barns-Graham's reputation has picked up marvellously since I have started to study her art for this thesis, there is still a very poor representation of her art in the Tate Collection (Appendix 26) and the one and only solo exhibition she was give by the Tate – *Wilhelmina Barns-Graham: An Enduring Image* – in St Ives,<sup>8</sup> was a revisiting of a reductive view of her art, focusing, yet again on her Glacier paintings and other, later paintings that Mike Tooby, the curator, considered to be related to the Glacier paintings. The solo exhibition, therefore, both delighted and upset Wilhelmina at one and the same time. It seemed to her as if she was dead for all these years and the body of art she produced since the 1950s was dismissed by the curatorial selection. Mellis, though had several works at the Tate Collection, for some time, never was given a solo exhibition there. By comparison it appears that their museal reception in Scotland is by far more supportive and consistent than that in England, and that is despite the fact that both women were part of the highly claimed British Modernism coined as 'St Ives School'.

<sup>6</sup> This is true with qualifying exceptions. French, Russian and German women modernist seem to have attracted greater attention than the British artists, while in the UK women of the Bloomsbury Group and Vorticism attract feminist writings.

<sup>7</sup> I have experienced a different responses when I am offering conference papers about modern or postmodern women artists, even in feminist contexts.

<sup>8</sup> The catalogue of the same title was written by Lynne Green (1999).

Apart from the regional issues there is also the issue of different locations of exposure and self-determined selection of works to show. There is a clear distinction between the museum's curatorial appraisal on one hand and that of the commercial galleries, art centres and collectors on the other. Mellis has enjoyed exhibitions in London, Scotland, Exeter, Orkney and Suffolk (Appendix 17); Barns-Graham equally had many exhibitions in galleries and art centres (appendix 23). Barns-Graham has been particularly lucky with the solid support and consistent solo exhibition that Art First Gallery staged. It is in these, perennial exhibitions that her most recent work is being exhibited to its best advantage and that collectors and admirers of her work come regularly to see her ever evolving and renewed artistic output.<sup>9</sup> It is mainly there that her spectacular series *Scorpio* can be seen and her most recent sublime expression of endless spaces in variations of blue and white. What emerges from this comparison is that there is a different perception of their artistic merit as well as their historical place in the minds of museums' curators and by the public, which has created a solid and enthusiastic support system and following for the two different, but so similarly placed in the margins of British modernism.

And finally, there remains the open-ended question of whether this 'popular' following does achieve the positioning that Margaret Mellis and Wilhelmina Barns-Graham deserve? Mellis took the step of selecting with her curator the art works for her retrospective 1997 (Appendix 18) similarly, if different due to the mediation of Rowan James, Barns-Graham determined which works were included in her touring exhibition shown first at the Crawford Centre, St Andrews, 2001. In both of these self-selected exhibitions, there was a broader sense of their life-long interests and the ways in which their early experiences and encounters in Penwith affected their expression. But these exhibitions also suffered from a too disjointed show that might be difficult for people who are not already *aficionados* in their art. It is therefore difficult to determine at this stage whether these exhibitions will

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<sup>9</sup> They exhibited solo shows in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001 and on her ninetieth birthday in 2002 'Painting as a Celebration'.

change the biased erasure of the two women artists from 'St Ives'. It is however my hope that this thesis is another stage in reconsidering the masculinist Artwriting of 'St Ives' and that it will be an intervention that leads to their insertion into their rightful place.

While on a day to day level women have gained new liberties, and living by one self, if after divorce, death of partner and simple choice of celibacy have become more acceptable it does not seem that these new liberty was replicated in the realm of women artists' professional reputation. Professional reputation for women modernists is permitted to exist only when chaperoned by men's reputation, name or status. Barns-Graham still has to suffer the indignation of her name forever being coupled and compared with that of Terry Frost, despite the fact that he arrived in St Ives only in 1946 (she did in March 1940 as a fully trained artist with prizes and scholarships to her name already). Terry Frost only then, returning from the prisoners' camp undertook painting as a vocation.

### Chapter conclusions

The aim of this consideration, namely focusing on the mechanisms of reputation positioning, either by galleries, curators, or the artists themselves is to attempt an exposition to the strategic spaces available to women painters. In other words leaving out for the time being the primary hierarchical motivation of creativity, to address the related problems of causal determinations in the complex machination between agency and structure. The crux of the analysis is the question to what extent do women painters, have autonomy over their positioning after their arduous commitment to art making. Harry Frankfurt, considering Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, argues that:

No matter how constrained, a will is autonomous to the degree that it is reflective. Autonomy is manifested precisely in second-order desires, that is, in the desire to have or not to have a desire. Such second-order desires might arguably fall under the constraints of one's *habitus*, since those reflexive desires, too, must be constrained by a set of cultural variants. ...[T]his desires produce the type of person the actor wants to be. But two quite distinct mechanisms are at work ...and *habitus* easily conflates them. Second-order desires may be the result of the irrational and unconscious mechanisms such as 'adaptive preference formation.' Such desires are neither autonomous nor practically rational. But other second-order desires may be the result of deliberations, character formation and planning; these mechanisms are employed most effectively in second-order and deliberate processes of socialization.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Quoted from James Bohman (1999) 'Practical Reason and Cultural Constraint: Agency in Bourdieu's Theory of Practice' in *Bourdieu; A Critical Reader* (1999) Richard Shusterman (ed) Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, pp 263

This model provides an apt analysis, refining and elaborating on Bourdieu's concept that opens up *Habitus* to becoming a dynamic, power-positioning field, eschewing a generalized predetermined causal outcome. Its attraction, for the purpose of my analysis is that it offers a balanced consideration of the conflicting trends of personal will, or biography, if you will, within cultural dominant structures that might be either internalized or fought against, or even co-exist in various permutations in each individual, autonomous artistic case. I like to believe that the current generation of young creative women, such as Lucy and Amyra, (fig 133) will not have to wait until they are in their late eighties for recognitions.

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## **APPENDICES**

SW

Please list of names  
for invitation to George  
Downing by First Post Saturday  
If you can't come personally  
you can have 5. Only 150  
printed but a lovely job.  
Potters (5p) are at Downing  
so if you have a place to put  
them (!) please collect  
some. Your price should  
be to put in the catalogue  
Guido has written down to reach  
does whole job.  
I think the Catalogue will be  
an eye opener. Have idea  
for 1/2 boat for crypt to sit  
in at Crypt.

Very hectic Sheila still O.K.  
Have made new type frame with  
Jarrow Australia handwood  
Mrs Peter

# Appendix 1

P. Lanyon letter to J. Wells with drawing of the crypt.



Window at Banks Head (Fine Art Society)

Ben  
Nicholson

17. Window at Banks Head  
Pencil on paper  
22.8 x 30.4  
(Fine Art Society)

## Appendix 2

Ben Nicholson, *Window at Banks Head*, n.d. pencil on paper 22.8 x 30.4,  
Fine Art Society.

Painters' Place: Banks Head Cumberland 1904-51 (11)  
The House, Canister, 10.8.91-25.9.91, Kestles Yard, Canister  
11.11.91-11.11.91, 11.11.91-11.11.91

The Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall owes its character to four men:

Borlase Smart, Bernard Leach, Adrian Stokes and Alfred Wallis. A

traditional artist of the "St Ives School", a potter, a writer, and a

"primitive" painter. Its officials are: President - Herbert Read, Chairman,

Leonard Fuller, Hon. Secretary - Phyllis Armstrong, Hon. Treasurer - George

Downing, Publicity Officer - Philip Keeley, Lay member representative - Pearl

Pearson, Committee: Ben Nicholson, Bernard Leach, Barbara Hepworth,

Muriome Peile, Dennis Mitchell, Peter Lanyon.

The Society was born from a split in the St Ives Society of Artists which  
~~was~~ a culmination of a fight by contemporary painters and sculptors to show  
their work in St Ives. M. Eddell Mitchell of the Castle Inn, M. George

Downing of the Bookshop and Borlase Smart had given encouragement

to ~~W. A. Graham~~, Sven Bælin, Peter Lanyon, John Wells, Bryan

Wynne and Guido Morris (the printer) to form a group. The Crypt

Exhibitions of 1946, 47 and 48 provided access to the St Ives Society

of Artists, for long an interest of the "St Ives School" alone. With the

active cooperation of Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth a corner

was reserved for exhibition of "modern" works in that Society. Borlase

Smart and Leonard Fuller regarded this section as a valuable contribution

to the future of the Society. Eventually fundamental differences of outlook

arose between this conception and the interests of the older St Ives School.

The Penwith Society was formed a year after the death of Borlase

Smart to whom it owes so much and

The Craftsmen had never ~~been~~ been included in the St Ives Society, except

for Guido Morris in the "Crypt" shows beneath the main gallery, the new

Penwith Society included them. In doing so it provides a nucleus

of cultural activity in the district and by encouraging original poetry,

music, dance and drama both in its own premises and in other societies.

### Appendix 3

Detail of a n.d. letter draft written by P. Lanyon, with the name of W. Barns-

Graham erased.

# Sven Berlin

*and Juanita Velasquez*

assisted by the Bitch Sheba and an Horse

invite you to a

## DRINKING IN THE TOWER

at The Island, Saint Ives, on New Year's Eve

Saturday 31st December 1949

# IO IS

*N.B. This is technically a Bottle Party,  
dress how you will*

PRINTED (OPCOURSE) BY GUIDO MORRIS AT THE LATIN PRESS

INVITATION  
TO THE  
PRIVATE VIEW  
AND OPENING  
OF AN  
EXHIBITION  
IN THE

## CRYPT

OF THE NEW  
GALLERY  
SAINT IVES

BY

PHYLLIS BOTTOME

AT  
THREE O'CLOCK  
ON SATURDAY  
AUGUST 2nd.

1947

PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS  
AND SCULPTURES BY

SVEN BERLIN

JOHN WELLS

PETER LANYON

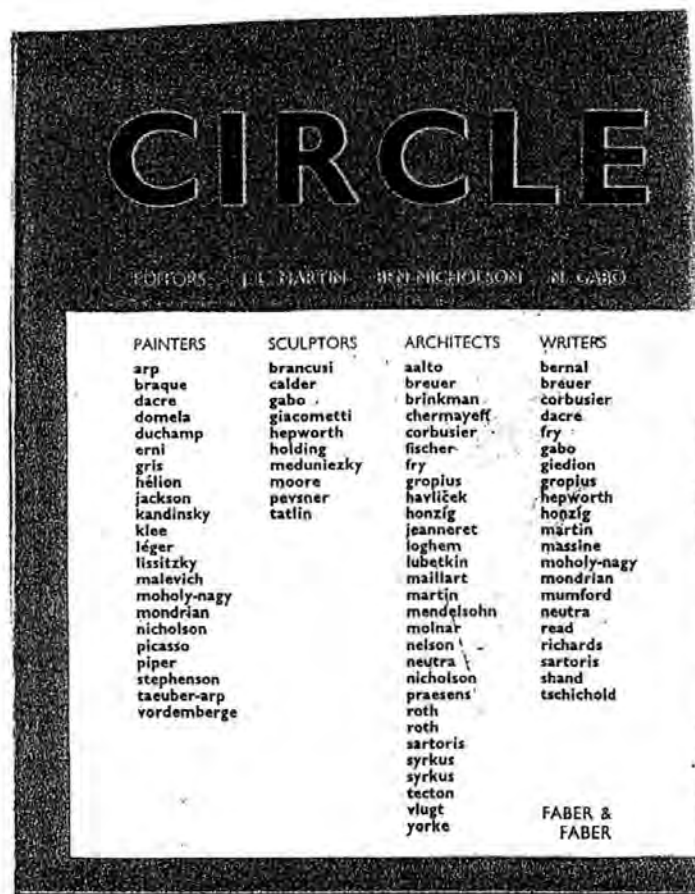
BARNS GRAHAM

&

SPECIMENS OF RECENT  
PRINTING BY

GUIDO MORRIS

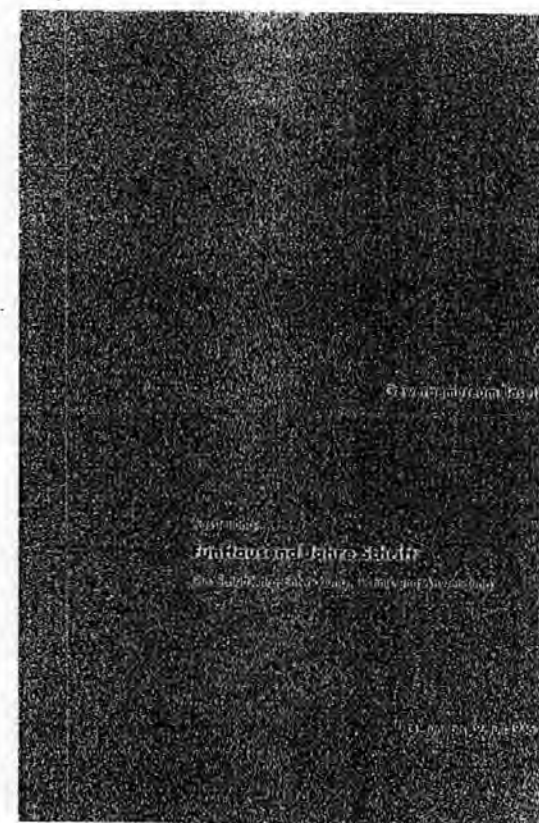




Appendix 5



Appendix 6



23

RUE LA BOETIE PARIS

[illegible]

ERE EXPOSITION  
INTERNATIONALE DU GROUPE

# CERCLE & CARRÉ

DU 18 AVRIL AU 1<sup>er</sup> MAI[illegible]

P E I N T U R E  
 S C U L P T U R E  
 A R C H I T E C T U R E  
 T H E A T R E

CONFERENCE  
LE 18 AVRIL A 21 H  
TORRES GARCIA PEINTURE  
LE 30 AVRIL A 21 H  
SEUPHOR PART 1961

7. Affiche de l'exposition Cercle et Carré.



Plus d'un exemplaire, ainsi la liste d'élèves sera plus complète.

[illegible][illegible]

1. *Chamaecyparis* *Angustifolia*  
 2. *Platanus* *occidentalis*

Ma Nouvelle, le soir  
après de vivre une semaine  
et que le fait de vivre  
est épouvantable. Je attend

A beautiful, familiar yet  
new, show you

Life is funny

1000

2. April

1. *Leptothorax curvirostris* (Fenestrata).

Lettre de Torres à Seuphor : liste des adhérents à Cercle et Carré au 2 avril.



arp . . . . .	page 2
kaumeister . . . . .	3
leothy . . . . .	4
uchheister . . . . .	5
alder . . . . .	6
elaunay r . . . . .	7
elaunay s . . . . .	8
dreier . . . . .	9
instein . . . . .	10
oltyn . . . . .	12
freundlich . . . . .	13
gabo . . . . .	14
gleizes . . . . .	15
gorin . . . . .	16
héliou . . . . .	17
herbin . . . . .	19
hone . . . . .	20
jelinek . . . . .	21
jellett . . . . .	22
kupka . . . . .	23
noholy-nagy . . . . .	24
mondrian . . . . .	25
ross . . . . .	26
evsner . . . . .	27
power . . . . .	28
prampolini . . . . .	29
roubillotte . . . . .	30
séligmann . . . . .	31
chiess . . . . .	32
chwitters . . . . .	33
strazewski . . . . .	34
strzeminski . . . . .	35
taeuber-arp . . . . .	36
utundjian . . . . .	37
valmier . . . . .	38
van doesburg . . . . .	39
vantongerloo . . . . .	40
villon j . . . . .	42
vordemberge . . . . .	43
wadsworth . . . . .	44
werner . . . . .	45

# abstraction création art non figuratif 1932

prix 15 francs

Appendix 8

*Abstraction Création Art non Figuratif, 1932*

If fashions in art, and even more in its evaluation, did not suffer violent and notorious changes from decade to decade it would not be necessary at this moment to write in defence of what has come to be known as "the School of St Ives". Nor would it be necessary to explain the central role of the Penwith Society in this Cornish movement. But the facts are that "St Ives", having dominated British painting from the late Forties to the mid-Sixties, has latterly suffered a neglect, in London, so insidious that many will be startled, now, when confronted with the evidence of that earlier dominance. For this very reason it is perhaps necessary briefly to offer a little of that evidence before proceeding to outline the history of the Penwith itself.

When the Tate Gallery and the British Council jointly organised an exhibition entitled BRITISH PAINTING AND SCULPTURE: 1960-1970 at the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C., in November 1970, the catalogue for the exhibition contained an interesting breakdown of the most significant "first appearances" of American artists in Britain and of British artists in the United States. The section headed "British Artists in America" contained, in its column of one-man exhibitions, fifty-one one-man shows between 1943 and 1965: no less than thirty of these were by artists connected more or less intimately with the Penwith Society - artists who are by general critical consent identified nowadays under the unmodish heading "St Ives". Stripped of detail, the list runs as follows (I am putting one asterisk after one artist - Henry Moore - who has been friendly to the Penwith over the years: an occasional exhibitor, he recently made a gift to the Penwith of an edition of lithographs; I have put two asterisks after the names of a couple of supporters whom current criticism firmly categorises as "St Ives" - Davie has a permanent home near St Ives - and three asterisks against those who have lived in or near St Ives, and been Members of the Penwith Society):

1943	Henry Moore*	1961	Ben Nicholson***
1946	Henry Moore*		Richard Smith
1949	Barbara Hepworth***		Alan Davie**
	Ben Nicholson***		Alan Davie**
1951	Henry Moore*	1962	Patrick Heron***
	Ben Nicholson***		Patrick Heron***
1952	Ben Nicholson***		Peter Lanyon***
1953	Graham Sutherland		Henry Moore*
1954	Henry Moore*		Eduardo Paolozzi
	William Scott**		William Scott**
1955	Ben Nicholson***	1963	Francis Bacon
	Henry Moore*		Peter Lanyon***
1955/56	Barbara Hepworth***		Richard Smith
1956	Alan Davie**	1964	Anthony Caro
	Ben Nicholson***		Ferry Frost***
	William Scott**		David Hockney
1957	Peter Lanyon***		Peter Lanyon***
1957	Barbara Hepworth***		Eduardo Paolozzi
	Peter Lanyon***		Richard Smith
	William Scott**	1965	Patrick Heron***
	Henry Moore*		Anthony Caro
1960	Patrick Heron***		Alan Davie**
	Ferry Frost***		Robyn Denny
	Eduardo Paolozzi		Allen Jones
	William Scott**		Ben Nicholson***
			William Tucker

## Appendix 9

Patrick Heorn, 1975 hand typed so-called 'Asterisks' article



THE FOLLOWING WORKS MAY BE SUBMITTED TO THE HANGING COMMITTEE FOR

TWO COPIES OF THIS FORM ARE PROPERLY COMPLETED IN UPPER CASE  
EVERY PAINTING AND SCULPTURE HAS THIS FULL INFORMATION IN UPPER CASE  
ATTACHED BY STRINGED LABEL  
ALL WORKS ARE SUBMITTED SUBJECT TO THE STATUTES OF THE SOCIETY



PROFESSIONAL NAME FOR USE IN CATALOGUE	TITLE	YEAR	PRICE	HANGING COMMITTEE	
				YES	NO
G. URWELL	KEEP THE ASTERISKS FLYING.	1984	YES		
IN TRANSIT	SUIT CASE	1984	C.O.D.		
BROTHER	CARNELLOE	1984	\$200		
MOTHER	STATUTE.	1984	KNIFE		
A COFFIN	BUGFLICKER.	1984	14417A		

MEMBER PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS MAY SUBMIT 6 WORKS AND MEMBER CRAFTSMEN 12  
NON MEMBER PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS MAY SUBMIT 2 WORKS AND NON MEMBER CRAFTSMEN 6

HANGING FEES MUST BE PAID WHEN WORKS ARE SUBMITTED TO THE CURATOR

THE SOCIETY BEARS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR NON EXHIBITING WORKS LEFT ON ITS PREMISES AND  
THE CURATOR WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF SUCH WORKS COULD BE COLLECTED IMMEDIATELY

VIVIAN NANKERVIS  
CURATOR  
PENWITH GALLERY BACK ROAD WEST ST IVES 579 CORNWALL

FOR THE ATTENTION OF KAFKA

THERE WILL BE A HANGING MEETING ON TUE AT FROM  
TO DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING MAIN AGENDA

- 1 STORM WATER
- 2 EFFLUENT
- 3 SPANISH MAIN
- 4 UNDERMINING
- 5 MAIN TENANTS

ATTENDING MEMBERS MAY ONLY CARRY ONE AUTHORIZED PROXY VOTE MAX PERMISS  
WEIGHT 20

THERE WILL BE A Summer EXHIBITION OPENING TO VISITORS ON 14 JUNE  
WHICH WILL BE OFFICIALLY OPENED BY Edward Leach ON 13 JUNE AT 8.15  
WHICH WILL BE UNOFFICIALLY OPENED ON HEAT

WORK MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE GALLERY AT THE FOLLOWING TIMES

BETWEEN 10 AND 1 ON 7 JUNE  
BETWEEN 10-1 AND 2-5 ON 8 "  
BETWEEN 10 AND 1 ON 9 "

AND MUST BE SUBMITTED ACCORDING TO THE STATUTES OF THE SOCIETY COPIES OF WHICH I  
BE OBTAINED FROM THE CURATOR

THE SOCIETY BEARS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY WORK OF ANY DESCRIPTION LEFT ON THE PREM  
AFTER TWO WEEKS OF COMPLETION OF EXHIBITION OR FOR ANY WORKS NOT ACCEPTED AND  
NOT HUNGRY

THERE WILL BE A MEETING OF THE HANGING COMMITTEE  
ATTABOY ON TOP  
AND THE MORNING AND AFTERNOON OF

THE FOLLOWING EXTRA ACTIVITIES WILL TAKE PLACE

THERE WILL BE A HANGING ON AT  
THERE WILL BE A QUARTERING ON AT  
THERE WILL BE A DRAWING BLEEDING ON AT  
AND SLEEPING

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION OF L'HAIN IS NOW DUE FOR THE PERIOD NOW TO ETC

VIVIAN NANKERVIS  
CURATOR  
PENWITH GALLERY BACK ROAD WEST ST IVES 579 CORNWALL

## Appendix 10

P. Lanyon Lampooning the submission forms for the hanging committee, &

his commentary on Ben Nicholson's letter to him

Jobs for the boys.

instead of having backbones - give them responsibility

Mutual respect and affection.

Isolality - small town troubles

Easy to dominate. ~~Master and slave~~ <sup>Master and slave</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> domination by groups or persons is impossible how?

1. By mutual respect and understanding. Assemblies?
2. By recognition of personality.
3. By cooperation in work for the society. (Karlson's attitude)
4. By permitting the widest possible latitude for development - a minimum of legislation and rules.

All propositions for changes in constitution etc should come from ordinary members and not from committee members.

B.

If one group of members decides that their outlook is important or significant, they should not be able to "capture" the society in the advancement of their views.

I state that the A-B ruling can be used for precisely this purpose - namely as a political instrument to gain control.

Why try and gain control. Is it ~~important~~ <sup>significant</sup>?

Everything points to the fact that it is not.

Of what nature is the "B" group at the moment?

~~Most~~ <sup>Most</sup> ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> romantic, primitive, humanist elements have been eliminated - at least the younger element - I state that this is a vital factor in the contemporary younger movement.

~~This has been recognized by~~

I believe that the real development in I. Ives has been shown in the Crypt and that these artists should be listened to.

## Introduction

For more than 100 years West Penwith, the most distant part of Cornwall, has attracted many different artists. Turner visited Falmouth and possibly also St Ives in 1811 and Whistler, Sickert and Mortimer Menpes spent some weeks sketching in St Ives in the winter of 1883-4, but it was to Newlyn and the surrounding area that painters were drawn, especially in the years before the First World War.

Stanhope Forbes, whose 'Health of the Bride' is one of the most popular paintings in the Tate Gallery, was a follower of Bastien-Lepage, and after painting in Brittany, settled in Newlyn in 1884. Forbes became a leading member of the Newlyn School whose characteristic subject matter was the life of the fishermen and their families. Other themes included the Symbolist works of T.C. Goch and the numerous scenes of youths bathing by H.S. Tuke, described by Sir John Betjeman as the "Boucher of the Sea Scouts". Newlyn school paintings were popular at the Royal Academy and, before despatch to London by special train each year, were usually shown at the Newlyn Art Gallery, which had been built by Passmore Edwards in 1895.

Other traditional painters, not of the Newlyn School, including Alfred Munnings and Laura Knight, spent varying periods in West Cornwall and then left; others settled and stayed until they died, as did Dod Procter R.A. and a very different artist, the future surrealist John Tunnard, who moved to Cadgwith, near Falmouth, in 1930.

Tunnard's solitary outpost of 'modern' art was to receive considerable reinforcements as a result of the Second World War. The writer and painter Adrian Stokes and his wife the painter Margaret Mellis had moved from Hampstead to Carbis Bay, next door to St Ives, in the spring of 1939. By the end of the summer Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth, two leading figures of the international constructivist movement of the 1930's, had joined them, and within a few weeks the pioneer Russian constructivist Naum Gabo had become a neighbour. Nicholson had visited St. Ives with Christopher Wood in 1928 when they discovered for themselves the retired sailor and rag and bone man Alfred Wallis, who had taken up painting in 1925 at the age of 70.

Gabo's considerable influence affected the part-time artist Dr. John Wells, then in medical practice in the Scillies, Wilhelmina Barns Graham, who arrived in St. Ives from Scotland early in 1940, and one of the few Cornish-born artists of international stature, Peter Lanyon, and Hepworth herself. Her work was also, over the years, to reflect the action of the tides and climate on the landscape, and the prehistoric stones of West Penwith. Nicholson continued to make abstract paintings and reliefs, but the colour became more naturalistic; in addition he began to include the imagery of the harbour and boats of St. Ives in some pictures.

Gabo left for the U.S.A. late in 1946, but other younger artists were returning to work and settle in Cornwall or stay on lengthy visits after war service, including Bryan Wynter, Terry Frost, Patrick Heron, William Scott, Peter Lanyon and John Wells, all except the last working at that time in a figurative way. Unlike the Newlyn School before the First War, the developing St. Ives School was concerned not with painting people, but, predominantly, landscape. William Scott, like Alan Davie who has also painted in West Cornwall, does not consider himself as a member of the St. Ives Group. Scott sees himself as one of a

larger grouping of West Country artists which includes those of St. Ives, with whom he made close contact particularly when teaching at Corsham with Lanyon, Frost and Wynter in the early fifties.

Hepworth, Nicholson and Wells were isolated abstract artists and it was not until 1949 that Frost turned to abstraction following Passmore's example. These artists developed contacts with the tiny band of constructivists working in London including Kenneth and Mary Martin and Anthony Hill, and the abstract painters Adrian Heath and Roger Hilton, and showed with them in exhibitions of abstract art in the early 1950's at Gimpel Fils and elsewhere in London. Another constructivist artist, Marlow Moss, was working in isolation in Penzance.

In St. Ives in the early 1940's almost the only place to show art was in the exhibitions arranged by the St. Ives Society of Artists where at that time work shown was exclusively of a 'traditional' nature. However the academic painter Borlase Smart encouraged those working in more adventurous idioms to join and exhibit with the St. Ives Society. Exhibitions of such works were also arranged, from c. 1945-1954, in the Castle Inn, St. Ives, the landlord of which was the sculptor Denis Mitchell's brother Endell. In 1946 Sven Berlin, Lanyon, Wells and Wynter and the exemplary printer Guido Morris founded the Crypt Group, so-called as exhibitions were held in the crypt of the Mariners' Chapel, the main floor of which was used by the St. Ives Society of Artists. Exhibitions, including one man shows by Barns Graham, Frost, Heron, Lanyon, Morris, Wells and Wynter, as well as an exhibition of work by Hepworth and Nicholson, were arranged in the bookshop of G.R. Downing, who later became the first honorary treasurer of the Penwith Society.

By late 1948 some of the members of the St. Ives Society of Artists were becoming apprehensive of the growing number of their colleagues working in more advanced styles, and at suggestions that exhibitions no longer be jury-free. Tension developed and as a result 20 of the more adventurous members resigned. At a meeting at the Castle Inn on 8th February 1949, 19 people, including Bernard Leach, resolved to found the Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall, making Herbert Read president. Unlike the St. Ives Society of Artists, the new group was to include 10 craftsmen among the members who would total 50, all of whom would retire every 2 years and submit themselves for re-election to ensure vitality. Furthermore, the painters and sculptors would be divided into two groups, A and B, one essentially figurative, the other abstract. The first exhibition of the new society was held in the summer of 1949 at the Old Public Hall, 18 Fore Street, St. Ives.

The Penwith Society's rule on the division of artists into figurative and non-figurative caused irritation and in 1950 six members, first Hyman Segal, and then others including Lanyon, resigned. Lanyon began to show his work, as did John Tunnard and John Armstrong at about the same time, at the Newlyn Gallery and these artists were an invigorating force among the Newlyn Society of Artists. Further tension developed in the Penwith Society in about the mid '50s when fears were expressed that attempts were being made to convert it into a society exclusively of abstract artists, but this did not occur. One change that did occur in the Society's rules was that only locally domiciled artists could be members, and as a result Victor Passmore, a member from 1952-4, had to resign. The rule that painter and sculptor members should be divided into two groups was dropped after several years of constant discussion.

Through the activities of the British Council several of the artists working in West Penwith perhaps became better known overseas than in Britain. Work by Hepworth was shown at the Venice Biennale in 1950 and that by Nicholson in 1954, and in 1952 he won first prize at the Carnegie International. Younger artists

were also shown abroad, but it was not until the second half of the '50s that American art dealers began to visit exhibitions of the Penwith Society.

The present exhibition contains work in diverse idioms; a unifying factor is that they all mirror in various ways the austere landscape of West Cornwall; the rocks, the ocean and the clear, silvery light of the area which may result from light being reflected off the sea which is never far away. Probably not since an exhibition of paintings from West Cornwall was held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1902 has such a survey as this been seen in London. Perhaps this present commendable effort will lead to a survey of art produced in Cornwall during the past 100 years, both in Newlyn and St. Ives as well as elsewhere in the county. It would yield much delight and understanding.

## Appendix 12

# Chronology

- 1811 Turner visits Falmouth and possibly St. Ives.
- 1853 Penzance School of Art established (14th in the UK and first in the west of England).
- 1883-4 Whistler, Sickert and Mortimer Menpes spend a few weeks in St. Ives painting in oil and watercolour.
- 1884 Stanhope Forbes settles in Newlyn.
- c.1884 Norman Garstin settles in Newlyn, moving to Penzance 4 years later.
- 1885 Frank Bramley settles in Newlyn.
- 1887 T.C. Goch settles in Newlyn. Gallery built at Penzance School of Art - converted into a library after Newlyn Gallery opened.
- 1888 Bramley paints 'A Hopeless Dawn'.
- 1889 Forbes paints 'The Health of the Bride', and marries Elizabeth Armstrong. Garstin paints 'The Rain in Raincoat Evening'. Lamorna Birch visits Penzance region frequently, settles in St. Buryan 1897 and Lamorna 1902.
- 1893 22nd October Passmore Edwards Gallery, Newlyn, opened. Forbes, Mrs. Forbes and Bramley open Newlyn School of Art.
- 1899 Adrian and Marianne Stokes working and living in Cornwall.
- 1902 March 22 - May 7 Exhibition at Whitechapel Art Gallery (opened 1901) of art produced in West Cornwall including work by Lamorna Birch, Julius Olsen, Moffatt Lindner, Melaine Stokes, Forbes, Garstin, Goch, Chevallier Taylor and others with long catalogue introduction by Norman Garstin.
- 1906 F. Cayley Robinson working in Newlyn.
- c.1908-12 Laura and Harold Knight living in Cornwall.
- c.1911-13 Alfred Munnings makes several visits to Cornwall painting in Lamorna area.
- 1916-18 Algernon Newton painting in Cornwall.
- 1919 Bursae Smart settles in Cornwall, later becoming secretary of the St. Ives Art Club.
- c.1919-26 Marlow Moss living in Cornwall.
- 1920 June - December Blanche Smith living and painting at St. Colum Major. Bernard Leach starts pottery at St. Ives with aid of Shoji Hamada who remains three years and then returns to Japan.
- c.1922 Charles Glinos painting at Porthleven.

- 1942 March 18th - May 9th London Museum, Lancaster House exhibition. 'New Movements in Art' organized by E.H. Remond included 21 artists of 1941 by Wells, and other works by Nicholson, Lanyon, Gabe, Mondrian and Mella. August 29th. Death of Alfred Wallis in Madras workshop. Bernard Leach later makes plaque for his grave.
- 1945 Nicholson and Hepworth move from Carbis Bay to St. Ives. Adrian Ryan working in Cornwall 1945-48. Articles on Alfred Wallis published in 'Horizon'.
- 1946 April John Wells gives up medical practice in Scillies, moves to Newlyn and takes up art full time. Bryan Wynter settles in St. Ives, moving c.1946 to the Coast, Zennor. From c.1945 Endell Mitchell, landlord of the Castle Inn, Fore Street, St. Ives, puts on exhibitions, one-man and mixed, of local 'advanced' artists including Burns-Graham, Wells, Frost, Lanyon, Berlin, Wynter, Tom Early, David Haughton, Agnes Drey, and Denis Mitchell. Sven Berlin settles in St. Ives. Heron leaves Leach Pottery, where he worked for one year, and moves to London.
- 1947 St. Ives Society of Artists moves from nos. 4 and 5 Porthminster Studios to Mariners' Church.
- 1948 Guido Morris moves to Carnarvon, St. Ives and sets up the Latin Press for 7th time. April - exhibitions of works by Wells at Lefevre. May - Terry Frost moves to Cornwall, first to Carbis Bay, then to St. Ives. Attends St. Ives School of Painting, run by Leonard Fuller. July - Heron spends 4 weeks in Mousehole. From c.1946 William Scott spends summers in Cornwall, usually near Mousehole, meeting Wynter, Lanyon and Frost who introduce him to Nicholson. Berlin, Wells, Lanyon, Morris and Wynter found Crypt Group in St. Ives - first exhibition in late summer. Late 1946 Stokes, then Mella leave Cornwall. November - Gabe leaves for America. Work by Nicholson, Hepworth and Tunnard shown at the International Exhibition of Modern Art at UNESCO, Paris.
- 1947 March 2nd. Death of Stanhope Forbes. David Haughton moves to Cornwall, renting cottage at Nansledens. David Bannister painting at Tremdrine, Zennor. Dennis Mitchell starts sculpting. Terry Frost studies at Camberwell School of Art 1947-9. Patrick Heron rents cottage on Sea Wall, St. Ives, for a few weeks each year until 1955 when he buys Eagle's Nest, Zennor, hence subject of most paintings 1947-55 a harbour at balcony window. 2nd exhibition of Crypt Group - Berlin, Lanyon, Burns-Graham, Wells, Morris.

- First work by Hepworth, 'Bioscopic Form', 1948, bought by Tate. Frost takes No. 4 Porthminster Studios, and studies for Intermediate NDD at Penzance School of Art. Fenwith Society publishes Broadsheet No. 1 (others in 1951, '52 and '53). Victor Passmore visits St. Ives to meet Ben Nicholson and makes a number of drawings of Fortmeor Beach, from which motifs later used in abstract compositions. Regal, Berlin, Cox and Barbara Tribe, and later Isabel Heath and Lanyon resign from Fenwith Society. Paul and June Foster rent cottage in West Cornwall and make frequent visits.
- 1951 Wynter teaching at Bath Academy of Art, Corsham (till 1956) Lanyon paints 'Porthleven' (Tate), for which he makes six preparatory constructions, the first time he did so specifically for a painting, and not independent experiments. Exhibition of works by 15 artists and craftsmen from around St. Ives, January/February, Heals Mansard Gallery, including works by Nicholson, Hepworth, Heron, Lanyon, Wells, Berlin, Miro, Peck, Wynter, Burns-Graham, Leach, Guido Morris, Wallis, Mitchell, Frost and Tom Early. Adrian Heath visits St. Ives in summer, makes diagrammatic drawings of movement of the sea from which he executes paintings in London in 1951/52. Frost and Wells, together with Mitchell, working as assistants to Hepworth, carving Festival of Britain figures 'Conceptual Forms'. Works by Lanyon, Armstrong, Scott, Wynter, Heron, Nicholson, Passmore and Tunnard commissioned for Arts Council exhibition '50 Paintings for '51'. Tunnard designs mural for Festival of Britain restaurant on South Bank. Works by Hepworth, Nicholson, Lanyon and Heron included in British Council exhibition shown in Vancouver and tour of 5 USA galleries. Works by Heron, Nicholson, Tunnard and Wells shown at first San Paolo Biennale. Frost and Heron join the Fenwith Society.
- 1952 Exhibition of abstract art at AIA Gallery, London, includes work by Hepworth, Nicholson, Burns-Graham, Frost and Mitchell. Bryan Pearce starts drawing and painting. Nicholson awarded first prize for painting at 39th Carnegie International. Frost teaching life drawing at Bath Academy of Art 1952-4. Frost's first one-man exhibition at Leicester Galleries, London. Passmore joins Fenwith Society. March - October - Heron paints series of abstracts. John Milne becomes assistant to Hepworth, and settles in St. Ives.

- 1928 August and September, Alfred Wallis (b. 1885) living in St. Ives and starts to paint at the age of 70.
- 1928-9 Tom Heron running Cryssede Siles at St. Ives, founded by Alec Walker - 1928 Wells Coates working for Cryssede.
- 1927 St. Ives Society of Artists founded.
- 1928 June 18th. Porthminster Gallery, St. Ives Society of Artists opened by Julius Olsen RA. Summer - Ben and Winifred Nicholson stay at Frost, S. Corn. On a day visit to St. Ives in August Nicholson and Christopher Wood discover Alfred Wallis in Back Road West. Nicholson spends weeks and Wood three months in St. Ives.
- 1930 Denis Mitchell moves to Balnoon, St. Ives, from Swansea. Scott starts painting. John Tunnard settles at Cadgwith, near Falmouth.
- 1936 Dr. John Wells takes up medical practice in Scillies with intention of saving money for 8 years so that he can paint full time. Stay until 1943. He had met Nicholson and Wood in 1928 and that involved for one month at Stanhope Forbes School.
- 1936 William Scott visits Cornwall and stays six months at Mousehole.
- 1937 Peter Lanyon studies at Penzance School of Art and then in 1938 at Euston Road School, where he meets Adrian Stokes. Lanyon makes his first abstract work in 1937.
- 1938 Leonard Fuller establishes 'St. Ives School of Painting'. Fred Nash paints 'Nocturnal Landscape' (Manchester City Art Gallery), in which Men-an-Tol prehistoric remains near Morvah are depicted, which Nash in fact never visited.
- 1939 Adrian Heath attends Stanhope Forbes School of Painting for six months January - July. April - Adrian Stokes and wife Margaret Mella move to Little Park Gwily, Carbis Bay. 23 August - Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and children come to stay with the Stokes, and remain until after Christmas. September - Hepworth suggests that oil power station chimneys at Hayle be camouflaged. Nicholson, Stokes, Mella and William Coldstream make designs which Mella executes on the chimneys. Nicholson gives Lanyon painting lessons. Lanyon makes a box construction of layers of coloured gelatin between glass and in front of a painted background.
- 1939-40 Kokoschka spends nine months painting at Polperro.
- 1940 Wilhelmina Burns-Graham decides to stay in St. Ives after visiting Margaret Mella, previously both fellow students at Edinburgh College of Art in early '30's. John Wells meets Gabe through Nicholson. Mella starts to make collages.
- 1941 Pottery Department started at Penzance School of Art. Bernard Leach the first to teach there. Marlow Moss settles in Penzance where she lives until death in

- Exhibitions at G.R. Downing's bookshop include one-man shows by Lanyon, Heron, Frost, Wynter, Burns-Graham, and one exhibition of work by Hepworth, Lanyon, Nicholson and Wells which included a Nicholson white relief of 1936. November - Death of Bursae Smart. First one-man exhibition of work by Wynter and Heron at Radford Gallery, London.
- c.1948 John Armstrong moves to Mousehole living there until 1955.
- 1948 'Alfred Wallis, Printmaker', by Sven Berlin, published. (Ithell Golguboun, while living in Hampstead, buys hut at Lamorna, staying there for periods each year, before moving to Paul permanently in 1959. John Tunnard teaching design at Penzance School of Art 1948-65. 2nd exhibition of work by Crypt Group. Work shown by Bill Barker, Burns-Graham, Berlin, Haughton, Heron, Ryan, Wells and Wynter. Sir Alfred Munnings, F.R.S., President of the St. Ives Society of Artists, unveils a plaque and opens a memorial exhibition in the Newlyn Art Gallery to Stanhope Forbes, and makes a verbal attack on the work of Matisse at the Tate Gallery. Winter 1948 - 49 - Last exhibition of St. Ives Society of Artists in which work by Lanyon, Nicholson, Hepworth, Wynter, Burns-Graham and other future members of the Fenwith Society shown.
- 1949 January - ten members of St. Ives Society of Artists sign petition expressing concern at suggestions that exhibitions no longer be jury-free. 20 members of the society resign. 8th February - At meeting at Castle Inn, it is resolved to found the Fenwith Society of Arts in Cornwall. Foundation members: Herbert Armstrong, W. Burns-Graham, Sven Berlin, David Cox (Hon. Sec), Agnes Drey, Leonard Fuller (Chairman), Isabel Heath, Barbara Hepworth, Marion Hecken, Peter Lanyon, Bernard Leach, Denis Mitchell, Marjorie Morley, Dixon Hance, Robin Hance, Ben Nicholson, Hyman Segal, John Wells. The meeting decides to make Herbert Read president. G.R. Downing is made honorary treasurer. Before the first exhibition of the Fenwith Society in the Public Hall, Fore Street, in June, the following join the Society: W. Arnold Forrester, Garick Barnes, Dorothy Bayley, Archibald Carner, Tom Early, David Haughton, Mary Jewell, Hilma Jilard, David Leach, Jeanne du Maurier, Alice Moore, Miroslav Prile, R.G. Perry, David Procter, W. Sifton (Fish). Barbara Tribe, Bryan Wynter. Denis Mitchell becomes Barbara Hepworth's assistant (till '54).
- 1950 Scott paints picture relating to harbours (and in '51 & '52) Work by Hepworth shown at Venice Biennale.

- 1953 Lanyon's 'Porthleven' presented to Tate by C.A.S. G.A.S. exhibition 'Figures in their Setting' at Tate includes Frost's 'Coastal Figure' 1952/53, 10 ft. high. Works by Heron, Nicholson and Wells shown in British Council exhibition toured in Sweden 1953/4. Althea Garstin and Alexander Mackenzie join the Fenwith Society. August - Guido Morris closes the Latin Press and leaves St. Ives. 12 works by Heron shown at 2nd Sao Paulo Biennale. Exhibition entitled 'Space and Colour' arranged by Heron at Hammer Gallery, London, July, includes works by Lanyon, Davis, Scott, Frost, Hilton, Passmore and Heron.
- 1954 'Nine Abstract Artists', edited by Lawrence Alloway, published including statements and reproduction of work by Frost, Passmore, Scott, Hilton and Heath. Works by Nicholson shown at Venice Biennale and later in Paris. Receives Ulissi Award. John Forrester, Stanley Dorfman, Roger Leigh, Jack Pender and William Redgrave join Fenwith Society.
- 1955 Exhibition at Heals Mansard Gallery of abstract designs including work by Frost, Lanyon, Snow, Fawcett, Burns-Graham, Wells, Dorfman, Hilton, Heron, Mitchell and Robert Adams. Also table linen mats printed by Mitchell and Dorfman including designs by Wells, Lanyon, Frost, Hilton, Mitchell, Snow, Burns-Graham, Heron, Hepworth and Dorfman. Work by Nicholson shown at 3rd International Art Exhibition in Japan. 'Governor of Tokyo' award. Nicholson retrospective at Tate Gallery. Patrick and Della Heron buy 'Eagle's Nest', Zennor. Karl Weschke goes to live in Zennor, as does Trevor Bell. Bryan Wall goes to live in St. Ives.



**JOHN ARMSTRONG** moved to Lamorna Cove, Mousehole, in 1947, and lived there for about ten years. Born in 1893, he had already exhibited at the Leicester and Lefevre galleries, had been a member of Unit One, and had worked as a designer for theatre, films (including several by Alexander Korda) and ballet (Facade, first performance 1931). He was a war artist from 1940 - 44. His work has been widely exhibited and is in numerous public collections: he was elected ARA in 1966, and died in London in 1973. A large memorial exhibition of his work was held at the Royal Academy in 1975.

1. Lamorna Cove 1949  
oil on board  
8 1/4 x 14 ins
2. Design for the Foyer of Telecinema, South Bank 1951  
oil on board  
13 1/4 x 27 1/4 ins
3. Battle Scene 1952  
oil on canvas  
36 x 30 ins
4. The Square 1952  
oil on canvas  
20 x 30 ins
5. Convocation 1953  
oil on canvas  
25 x 30 ins
6. Purple Sea 1947  
gouache on paper  
11 x 15 ins



**TREVOR BELL** was born in 1930, and moved to St. Ives in 1955 on the advice of Terry Frost, and became a member of the Penwith Society in that year. His first one-man exhibition was at the Waddington Galleries in 1958. He was awarded an Italian Government Scholarship in 1958/9, and was a prizewinner at the first Paris International Biennale in 1959. He has exhibited widely, and his work is in many public collections. He now lives and works in the United States.

7. The Edge of the Sea 1955  
oil on canvas  
42 x 18 ins
8. Coast Image 1957  
oil on canvas  
36 x 23 1/4 ins



**SVEN BERLIN** was born in London in 1911, and settled in St. Ives in 1945. He was a founder member of the Penwith Society, from which he resigned with Lanyon and others in 1950. He has held more than twenty one-man exhibitions both in England and in the United States, and his work is included in numerous public collections. He is also known as a writer and broadcaster, publications including 'Alfred Wallis, Primitive' (1948). He now lives and works in Dorset.

9. Boat under Moon 1947  
oil on gesso  
11 x 14 1/2 ins
10. The Frog 1947  
carved statette  
height 2 1/4 ins, length 6 1/4 ins.



**DAVID BOMBERG** was born in Birmingham in 1890. He studied at The Slade School of Fine Art, and was a founder member of the London Group in 1913. He first met Ben Nicholson in 1921, and visited Switzerland with him in 1922. He was painting in Trendrinc, Cornwall, in 1947, by which time he had already travelled widely and exhibited extensively. His work has subsequently been exhibited widely, and is included in many important public collections internationally. He died in 1957: the last retrospective exhibition of his work was at Fischer Fine Art, London, in 1973.

11. Trendrinc, Cornwall 1947  
oil on canvas  
33 x 43 ins



**ITHELL COLQUHOUN** was born in 1906 and attended the Slade School of Fine Art. During the thirties she visited Paris and was associated with manifestations of the Surrealist Movement in London. She held her first London exhibition at the Fine Art Society in 1936. She began to visit Cornwall in the forties, finally settling there in 1959. Since then she has exhibited her work consistently both in England and abroad.

12. Leave Uncombed your Darling Hair 1953  
indian ink  
17 1/4 x 12 1/4 ins



**PAUL FEILER** was born in 1918, and studied at the Slade School of Fine Art from 1937 - 40. He first visited Cornwall in 1948, and took up permanent residence there in 1954. Since 1958, he has held fourteen one-man exhibitions, at the Grosvenor, Redfern, Archer and New Vision Galleries in London, Bristol, Plymouth, Edinburgh and in Washington as well as in St. Ives. His work is in many public collections among them the Tate Gallery, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Department of the Environment in London, and many others both in the provinces and overseas.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 13. Window 1948/9<br>oil on canvas<br>17 x 24 ins            | 18. Window<br>Seascape<br>oil on board<br>13 x 16 ins       |
| 14. Old Man's Beard 1951<br>oil on board<br>11 x 13 ins      | 19. Old Man's<br>no. 2 1955<br>oil on canvas<br>26 x 30 ins |
| 15. Cornish Landscape 1950/51<br>oil on canvas<br>8 x 16 ins | 20. Cornish C<br>1951<br>oil on canvas<br>26 x 33 ins       |
| 16. Coastline, Cornwall 1952<br>oil on wood<br>12 x 16 ins   | 21. Falmouth<br>Window I<br>oil on board<br>28 x 36 ins     |
| 17. Mother and Child 1949<br>oil on Board<br>16 1/2 x 14 ins |   |
| 18.  |   |





26

**TERRY FROST** was born in 1915, but did not start painting until he was a prisoner of war, encouraged, amongst others, by Adrian Heath, at whose suggestion he moved to St. Ives in 1946. In 1947, he enrolled at Camberwell School of Art, where he studied under Victor Pasmore, who visited St. Ives as a result of reading Frost's correspondence with Ben Nicholson. He worked as an assistant to Barbara Hepworth in 1951, and in 1952 held his first one-man exhibition at the Leicester Galleries. From 1954-6 he was Gregory Fellow of Painting at Leeds University. After living in Banbury for ten years, he returned to Cornwall in 1974. A major retrospective exhibition of his work, was held at the Serpentine Gallery, London in 1977 prior to touring the provinces.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 22. Night Harbour 1952<br>oil on canvas<br>33 x 44 ins            | 25. Yellow and Ochre 1959<br>oil on canvas<br>30 x 25 ins         |
| 23. Grey Movement 1952<br>oil on canvas<br>16½ x 30½              | 26. Corsham Silver and White 1953<br>oil on canvas<br>43 x 30 ins |
| 24. Black and White Movement 1955<br>oil on canvas<br>28 x 36 ins |   |



31

**ALETHEA GARSTIN** was born in Penzance in 1894, daughter and pupil of the leading Newlyn impressionist Norman Garstin (1847-1925). She remained based in Penzance until 1960, when she moved to Zennor, where she still lives. Before and after World War I she painted frequently in northern France, particularly in Brittany, as well as in West Cornwall. But Rome, Morocco, Kenya, the Caribbean, Ireland and London have all provided subjects in a much travelled career. She has always exhibited widely, and has works in numerous public and private collections in Britain, Ireland and America. A travelling retrospective exhibition, shared with her father, is in preparation.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 27. Landscape<br>oil on board<br>6 x 4 ins         | 31. Customs House, Dublin<br>oil on board<br>9 x 12 ins |
| 28. The Cock<br>oil on board<br>4½ x 5½ ins        | 32. The Band, Penzance<br>oil on board<br>18 x 26 ins   |
| 29. Landscape<br>oil on board<br>4 x 5 ins         |   |
| 30. Caribbean House<br>oil on board<br>11 x 10 ins |   |



35

**WILLIAM GEAR** was born in Fife in 1915, and studied at Edinburgh from 1932-39. He worked in Paris from 1947-50, but spent the summer of 1948 painting in St. Ives. He was curator of the Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, from 1958-64, and head of the Fine Art Department at Birmingham College of Art from 1964-75. He has received numerous prizes and awards, and became a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1970. He has held one-man exhibitions in Britain, Italy, the United States, Germany, Australia and in many group exhibitions internationally. His work is included in many public collections in England and abroad.

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| 53. Composition, June 1948<br>oil on canvas<br>16 x 20 ins |
| 54. Composition, July 1948<br>oil on canvas<br>20 x 24 ins |
| 55. St. Ives, June 1948<br>watercolour<br>20½ x 14½ ins    |
| 56. St. Ives, June 1948<br>watercolour<br>20½ x 14 ins     |



44

**WILHELMINA BARNS-GRAHAM** was born in Scotland in 1912 and moved to Cornwall in 1940. She was a founder-member of the Penwith Society in 1949, and from 1956-7 taught at Leeds School of Art. She has held many one-man exhibitions since 1947, most recently at the Marjorie Parr Gallery, London, in 1971, and at the Wills Lane Gallery, St. Ives, in 1976. Public collections containing her work include the Arts Council, the British Council, the Tate Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum and many others.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 37. White Rocks, Scilly Isles 1953<br>drawing<br>20 x 30 ins              | 41. Glacier Painting - Brown and Green 1951<br>oil on canvas<br>20 x 24 ins |
| 38. Composition: Relief 3 1954<br>board on board<br>8 x 10½ ins           | 42. Glacier: six studies 1949<br>offset<br>20 x 28 ins                      |
| 39. Glacier Drawing: Upper Grindelwald 1949<br>mixed media<br>16 x 24 ins | 43. Nocturne 1952<br>oil on canvas<br>34 x 44 ins                           |
| 40. Glacier - Nocturne 1950<br>oil on board<br>11 x 14½ ins               | 44. Forthmeor in the Snow 1947 - oil on wood<br>15 x 18 ins                 |
|   | 45. Glacier Chasm 1951<br>oil on canvas<br>30 x 36 ins                      |



47

**DAVID HAUGHTON** was born in 1924, and studied at the Slade School of Fine Art. He lived in Cornwall from 1947-50, and though now living in London, where he teaches at the Central School of Art and Design, he still makes frequent visits to Cornwall. He was a founder member of the Penwith Society of Arts. His work was most recently exhibited in London in 'British Painting 1974' at the Hayward Gallery, and is included in many public and private collections internationally, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

- |   |
|---|
| 46. St. Just 1948<br>oil on board<br>2½ x 15 ins        |
| 47. Carne Bosavern 1951<br>oil on canvas<br>12 x 18 ins |



**ADRIAN HEATH** was born in 1920, and studied at Newlyn under Stanhope Forbes before attending the School in Oxford in 1939. From 1941-5 he was a prisoner of war in Germany, where he met, amongst others, T. Frost. After the war he returned to the Slade, and then exhibited with the London Group in 1949. He stayed in St. Ives in 1951. His first one-man exhibition was at the Redfern Gallery in 1957, and in the same year he published 'Abstract Art, its Origin and Meaning'. In 1955 he began to teach at Bath Academy of Art; his work is included in numerous public collections and has been widely exhibited. He lives and works in London.

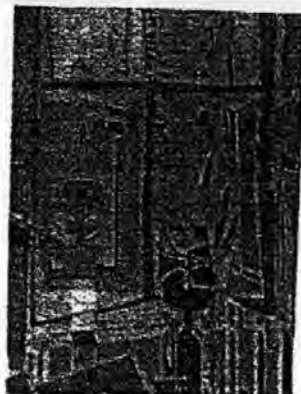
- |  |
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| 48. Composition 1952<br>oil on canvas<br>24 x 20 ins |
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49

**BARBARA HEPWORTH** was born in Yorkshire in 1903, and studied at Leeds, the Royal College of Art, and in Florence and Rome. She settled in St. Ives in 1939 with her husband, Ben Nicholson, and lived there until her death in May 1975. She exhibited her work at the Venice Biennale in 1950, and subsequently in many exhibitions internationally. She received numerous awards, and her work is in many public collections all over the world. She was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1965.

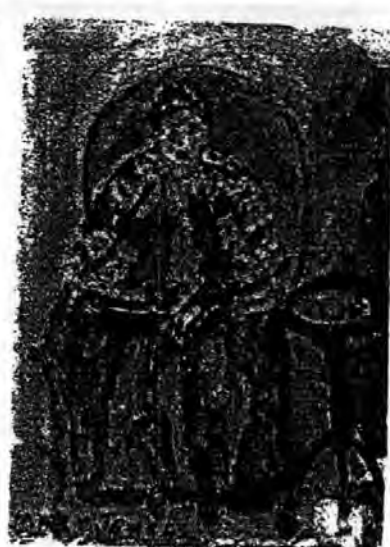
49. *Involute I* 1946  
bronze 3/9  
L 10 ins
50. *Reclining Figure I* (Zennor) 1955-6  
scented guards  
L 25 ins
51. *Figures, Reflection & Head* 1951  
oil and pencil on board  
22 1/4 x 14 1/4



57

**PATRICK HERON**, born at Leeds in 1920, first lived in Cornwall - at Newlyn, St. Ives and Zennor - between 1925 and 1930. Although he has held numerous one-man exhibitions internationally, his first one-man shows were at Downing's Bookshop in St. Ives and the Redfern, in 1947. Throughout the decade 1945-55 he painted regularly in both St. Ives and London; but he has lived at Zennor since 1956. Between 1945 and 1958 he published art criticism, in London and New York. His work is included in over fifty public collections in Europe, North America and Australia.

52. *Mousehole Window* 1946  
oil on canvas  
25 x 30 ins
53. *Harbour Window with Two Figures*, St. Ives: July 1950  
oil on board  
48 x 60 ins
54. *Portrait of Margaret Mellis* 1951  
oil on canvas  
36 x 28 ins
55. *Figure in Harbour Room*, St. Ives: 1952-54  
oil on canvas  
36 x 18 ins
56. *Blue Table and Red Carpet* 1954  
oil on canvas  
30 x 25 ins
57. *Grambe Vicarage York* 1949  
oil on canvas  
36 x 28 ins



59

**MARY JEWELS** is a self-taught artist whose family have lived in Newlyn for many generations. Her close contact with members of the Newlyn School, in particular Cedric Morris, was instrumental in her taking up painting in 1920: she first exhibited in London in 1928, at the instigation of Augustus John. She was a founder member of the Penwith Society of Arts, and held her most recent one-man exhibition at the Newlyn Art Gallery in March of this year.

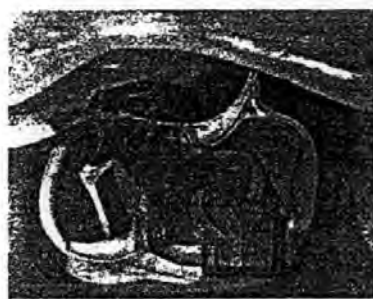
58. *Cinema*  
oil on canvas  
20 x 30 ins
59. *My Mother*  
oil on board  
11 x 7 1/4 ins



61

**GEORGE LAMBOURN** was born in 1900 and began painting in 1920. He studied at Goldsmith's College and the Royal Academy Schools and first settled in Cornwall in 1938. His first one-man exhibition was at the Matthiessen Gallery in 1936, and he was a war artist during the second world war. Subsequently he exhibited his work frequently, most recently at the Newlyn Art Gallery in 1976, and carried out numerous portrait commissions. His work is included in public collections including the Imperial War Museum and the Tate Gallery. He died in 1977.

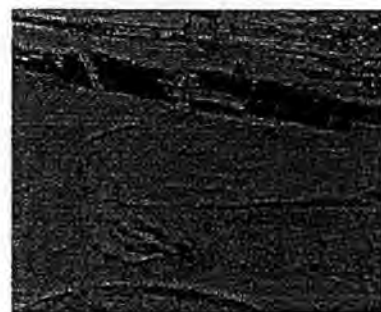
60. *Cornish Village*  
oil on board  
19 1/4 x 24 ins
62. *Gina and Clare*  
oil on canvas  
36 x 28 ins
61. *The Green Nosed Clown*  
oil on board  
13 x 9 1/4 ins



72

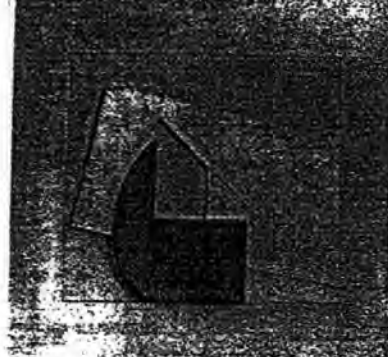
**PETER LANYON** was born in St. Ives in 1918, and lived there until his death in 1964. He served in the RAF during the war, and after his marriage in 1946 lived in the house which had earlier been occupied by Adrian Stokes and Margaret Mellis. One-man exhibitions of his work have been held at the Lefevre Gallery, Gimpel Fils and the New Art Centre in London, at the Catherine Viviano Gallery in New York, and in 1968 an Arts Council exhibition of his work at the Tate Gallery later toured the provinces. His work is included in a large number of important public collections internationally.

63. *Coast Soaring* 1958  
wood and copper  
57 x 22 ins
64. *Harvest Festival* 1952  
oil on board  
68 x 20 ins
65. *Study for St. Just* 1951  
gouache and drawing  
17 1/4 x 10 1/4 ins
66. *Portreath Study* 1949  
drawing  
21 1/2 x 28 1/2 ins
67. *Red Body County II* 1953. gouache  
22 x 17 ins
68. *Sketch for Mullion Bay - The Rock* 1954  
drawing  
11 x 14 ins
69. *Study for Landscape* 1950  
gouache  
11 1/4 x 15 ins
70. *Prelude* 1947  
oil on board  
26 x 40 ins
71. *Poster of "Crypt" Group*
72. *Yellow Runner* 1946  
oil on board  
17 1/2 x 23 ins
73. *Blue Shrine* 1947  
oil on canvas  
11 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins



**ALAN LOWNDES** was born in Cheshire in 1921. Left school at fourteen, and was apprenticed to a decorator until the outbreak of war, taking up painting full-time in 1945. He had exhibited in many galleries in the United Kingdom, principally at the Crane Kalman Gallery, where he has had regular one-man shows since 1957, also in the United States. His work has been included in group shows, and is included in a number of public collections.

74. *The Seagull*  
oil on board  
17 x 21 ins



79

MARGARET MELLIS studied at Edinburgh College of Art: married Adrian Stokes, and moved to St. Ives in 1939. Their friendship with Ben Nicholson was largely responsible for him moving to St. Ives with his wife, Barbara Hepworth, at the beginning of the war. She left St. Ives in 1947. In 1942 she took part in the exhibition 'New Movements in Art' at the London Museum, Lancaster House, and in 1950 showed at the Penwith Society's Gallery in St. Ives. Subsequently she has exhibited widely, her last one-man exhibition in London being at the Basil Jacobs Gallery in 1972. Her work is in many public collections including the Tate Gallery, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Department of the Environment. She lives and works in Suffolk.

- 75. Collage with Red Triangle I 1940  
paper  
11 1/4 x 9 ins
- 76. Collage with Red Triangle II 1940  
chalked paper  
11 5/8 x 9 ins.
- 77. Collage: Yellow Oval 1940  
paper and ink  
13 1/2 x 12 1/2 ins

- 78. Transparent Collage 1940-1  
transparent papers  
16 1/4 x 16 1/4 ins
- 79. Wood Relief 1941  
wood  
14 1/2 x 14 1/2 ins
- 80. Brown Collage 1941-2  
cardboard paper chalk and ink  
16 1/4 x 17 ins
- 81. Collage with Dark Red Oval 1942  
paper and ink  
11 3/4 x 9 ins
- 82. Collage: Blue Ground 1942  
paper and ink  
9 1/4 x 12 1/4 ins
- 83. Small marble piece 1943-4  
Sicilian marble
- 84. Portrait of Sven Berlin 1945  
oil on canvas  
20 x 21 ins
- 85. Looking Glass Drawing 1945  
pencil and paper  
13 1/4 x 10 ins



86

JOHN MILNE was born in Lancashire in 1931. After studying at Salford School of Art and working in Paris, he moved to St. Ives, where he still lives, and became assistant to Barbara Hepworth in 1952. He has exhibited annually at the Penwith Society and the Newlyn Art Gallery since 1952, and had held many one-man exhibitions, most recently at Plympton House, Plymouth (a National Trust exhibition) and the Genesis Gallery, New York, in 1977. His work is included in many public collections internationally, amongst them the Tate Gallery, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Contemporary Art Society, London.

- 86. Vertical Form 1954  
Nigerian guarea  
36 ins high



88

DENIS MITCHELL was born in Middlesex in 1912. He first came to St. Ives in 1930, with his brother Endell, who later took over the Castle Inn, where exhibitions of contemporary work were held from c.1945 - 54. He was a founder member of the Penwith Society in 1949, and its chairman from 1955-57. From 1949-60 he was assistant to Barbara Hepworth. There have been a number of one-man exhibitions of his work, both in England and abroad, the most recent being a British Council travelling exhibition in 1974. His work is in numerous public collections in England, Wales, Australia, New Zealand and South America. He lives and works in Newlyn, Cornwall, where he shares a studio with John Wells.

- 87. Oracle 1955  
guarea  
H. 49 ins
- 88. Mullion 1953  
elm  
H 35 1/2 ins
- 89. Maternal Form 1950  
Cornish Elm  
H 17 1/4 ins
- 90. Study for Carvings III-52 (drawing)  
oil on gesso  
13 1/4 x 9 7/8 ins.



MARLOW MOSS was born in 1890, and first came to Cornwall in 1919. In 1927 she moved to Paris, where she met Mondrian, and became a pupil of Leger and Ozenfant. She returned to Cornwall in 1940 and lived there, with frequent visits to Paris, until her death in 1958. During this latter period, she had two one-man exhibitions at the Hanover Gallery, London, in 1949 and 1958. The most recent exhibition of her work was Gimpel and Hanover Galerie, Zurich, in 1973-4.

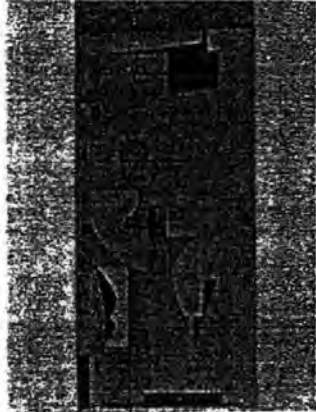
- 91. White, Black and Blue 1950  
oil on canvas  
18 x 18 ins
- 92. White, Black and Red 1948  
oil on canvas  
31 1/2 x 15 1/4 ins
- 93. White, Black, and Red 1950  
oil on canvas  
16 x 20 ins
- 94. White, Black and Yellow 1952  
oil on canvas  
18 x 12 ins





**ALEXANDER MACKENZIE** was born in Liverpool in 1923, attended Liverpool College of Art, and moved to Cornwall in 1951. He held his first one-man exhibition at the Waddington Galleries, London, in 1959. In 1964 he became vice-chairman of the Penwith Society of Arts, of which he has been a member since 1952. His most recent one-man exhibition was at the Maltrahen gallery in 1970; his work is included in Public Collections in Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia, and in many private collections internationally.

- 95. *Marine, April 1954* 98. *Lias 1953*  
oil on board oil on board  
15 x 11 ins 9 x 13 ins
- 96. *Still Life 1953*  
oil on board  
6 x 11 ins
- 97. *White Continent 1955*  
oil on board  
12 x 4 ins



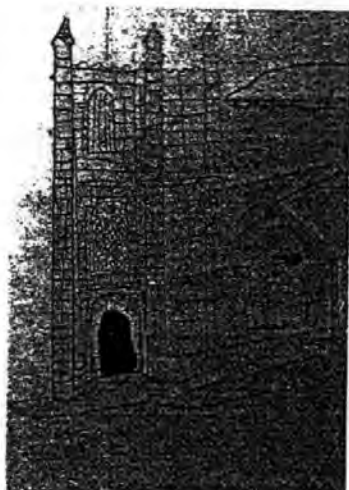
**BEN NICHOLSON** was born in 1894, the son of Sir William Nicholson. He first visited Cornwall with Christopher Wood in 1928, and finally settled there with Barbara Hepworth at the outbreak of war, spending the last months of 1939 with Margaret Mellis and Adrian Stokes at Carbis Bay. His first one-man exhibition was at the Adelphi Gallery in 1922, and by 1939 he had already exhibited extensively, including four one-man shows at the Lefevre Gallery, London. Subsequently numerous major one-man and retrospective exhibitions of his work have been held internationally, and his work is included in numerous public collections all over the world.

- 99. *Mounts Bay, July 20th, 1947*  
oil on canvas  
23 x 10 ins
- 100. *Olive Tree in Tuscany 1955*  
oil on board  
16½ x 11½ ins



**VICTOR PASMORE** was born in 1908, and was a founder member of the Euston Road School in 1937. He turned to abstraction after the war, and first visited Cornwall in 1947 after reading Terry Frost's correspondence with Ben Nicholson: he joined Nicholson and Hepworth exhibiting at the Penwith Society in 1950. From 1954-61 he was master of painting at Durham University, and was a Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1963-66. He has received numerous awards, and his work has been exhibited extensively and internationally, most recently at Marlborough Fine Art, London, in September/October 1977. Since 1966 he has been living and working in Malta and London.

- 101. *Spiral Motif, Subjective Landscape 1951*  
oil on board  
23 x 11½ ins
- 102. *Spiral Motif, Black and White 1951*  
oil on paper  
24 x 20 ins
- 103. *Beach in Cornwall 1950*  
pen and ink on card  
10½ x 12½ ins



**BRYAN PEARCE** was born in St. Ives in 1929, and suffers from phenylketonuria, a genetic disorder inhibiting development of the brain-cells. He took up painting in 1953, from 1953-7 studied at the St. Ives School of Painting. In recent years he has held many one-man exhibitions both in London and in Cornwall, including four at the New Art Centre. His work is included in a number of public collections, among others the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Contemporary Art Society, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, and the Education Committees of Cornwall, Devon and Portsmouth.

- 104. *Lighthouse*  
watercolour  
15 x 19½ ins
- 105. *Ten trays*  
watercolour  
15 x 19½ ins

- 106. *Ship*  
watercolour  
15 x 17 ins
- 107. *Window I*  
watercolour  
15 x 19½ ins
- 108. *Window II*  
watercolour  
15 x 19½ ins
- 109. *Village Scene*  
Watercolour  
15 x 19½ ins
- 110. *Houses*  
watercolour  
15 x 19½ ins
- 111. *Art School Interior*  
watercolour  
14½ x 10½ ins
- 112. *The Parish Church*  
watercolour  
14½ x 10½ ins
- 113. *The Arches, St. Ives, 1955-56*  
watercolour  
10½ x 14½ ins
- 114. *Church Tower and Peep of Harbour, 1955*  
watercolour  
14½ x 10½ ins
- 115. *Jug and Flowers 1956*  
watercolour  
14½ x 10½ ins
- 116. *In the Studio, 1955*  
watercolour  
14½ x 10½ ins



**JACK PENDER** lives and works in Mousehole, Penzance, where he was born in 1918, and is a long-time member both of the Penwith and the Newlyn societies of art. His work has been shown in frequent one-man exhibitions in the west country, and in group exhibitions in London, Belgium and the U.S.A. In 1974 he was the subject of a BBC television film 'Jack Pender: Artist in a Cornish Harbour'.

- 117. *Trojan 1950*  
oil on board  
31 x 23 ins
- 118. *Beach Forms 1950*  
oil on board  
20 x 32 ins
- 119. *Wave 1951*  
oil on board  
18 x 6 ins

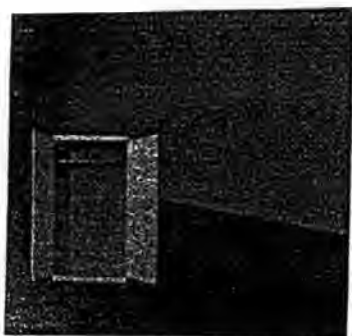
Lamorna 1952  
oil on canvas board  
20 x 24 ins  
Zenon I 1954  
oil on board  
15 x 26 ins  
Zenon II 1954  
oil on canvas  
24 x 36 ins  
Thistles 1955  
oil on board  
18 x 5 ins

PETER POTWOROWSKI was born in Warsaw in 1898. He took up residence in England in 1943, having previously visited this country whilst living in France in 1928. His first London exhibition was at the Redfern Gallery in 1946, and this was followed by a number of one-man shows at Gimpel Fils from 1948. In 1949 he started teaching at the Bath Academy, Corsham, where he came in contact with Lanyon, Wynter, Frost, Heath and other artists who were also teaching there. He returned to Poland in 1958, and in 1960 had a retrospective exhibition at the Venice Biennale. His work has been widely exhibited in Europe and America, and is in numerous public collections. He died in Poland in 1962.

124. Reading Girl 1948  
oil on canvas  
36 x 28 ins  
125. Najac 1953  
oil on canvas board  
13 x 18 ins

DOD PROCTER, with her husband Ernest, studied under Stanhope Forbes at Newlyn in 1907-8. Born in 1886, she had exhibited extensively with her husband before the second war, and her work was in the collection of the Tate Gallery as early as 1927. After Ernest's death in 1935, she held her first one-man exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in 1944, having been elected R.A. in 1942. During the fifties and early sixties she travelled to Jamaica and Africa; she died at Newlyn in 1972. Her work was last exhibited in London, with that of her husband, at the Fine Art Society in 1973.

126. The Lustre Jug 1944  
oil on board  
36 x 24 ins  
127. Still Life 1945  
oil on board  
18 x 24 ins



ALBERT REUSS was born in Vienna in 1890, and first came to Mousehole, where he lived predominantly until his death in 1976. He had first exhibited in Vienna in 1926, and his work was included in the Chicago International Exhibition of 1933. He held many one-man exhibitions, particularly at the O'Hana Gallery, London, and his work is included in public collections in Vienna, Moscow, London and Israel.

128. Clothes Line  
oil on canvas  
14 x 18 ins  
129. Open Cupboard  
oil on canvas  
25½ x 21½ ins



ADRIAN RYAN, who was born in 1920, first visited Cornwall in 1943 and '44, when he spent the summers painting in Padstow. He lived in Mousehole from 1945-51. Between 1943 and '52 he held several one-man exhibitions, of Cornish paintings and still lifes, at the Redfern Gallery, London. In 1950 his work was included in 'Contemporary English Painting', and Arts Council exhibition in Bristol, and in 1956 he held a one-man exhibition at Tooth's Gallery, London. In 1959 he returned to Mousehole, where he lived until 1965. He now lives and works in London.

130. Paul Church 1947  
oil on canvas  
36 x 28 ins  
131. The Road to Paul 1946  
oil on canvas  
36 x 26 ins  
132. Fish and Mussels 1950  
oil on canvas  
18 x 24 ins  
133. Cornish Landscape 1951  
oil on canvas  
20 x 30 ins



WILLIAM SCOTT was born in 1913 and spent much of his childhood in Northern Ireland. He studied at the Royal Academy Schools from 1931-35, and first visited Cornwall in 1936. From 1937-9 he lived in France, and during the war served in the Royal Engineers. In 1946 he became Senior Painting Master at Bath Academy of Art, and spent subsequent summers in Cornwall, where he came into contact with Wynter, Lanyon, Frost and Nicholson. His first one-man exhibition was at the Leger Gallery in 1942, and since then he has exhibited frequently and internationally, including an important retrospective exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1972. His work is in major public collections in many countries. He lives and works in London and Somerset.

134. The Harbour 1952  
oil on canvas  
24 x 36 ins  
135. The Harbour 1950-51  
oil on canvas  
22 x 39 ins



**ADRIAN STOKES**, writer and painter, was born in London in 1902, and moved to Carbis Bay, shortly after his marriage to the painter Margaret Wells in 1938. Nicholson and Hepworth spent the latter part of 1939 with the Stokes, before establishing themselves independently at St. Ives. He left Cornwall on his remarriage in 1947. He held his first one-man exhibition at the Leger Gallery in 1951, and subsequently his work has been widely exhibited, including a memorial exhibition at the Tate Gallery shortly after his death in 1972. His work is in many public collections, and a publication of three volumes of his complete writings is currently in preparation.

136. *Hill, Road, Valley c. 1945*  
oil on board  
17½ x 17½ ins

137. *West Penwith Moors c. 1945*  
oil on canvas  
24 x 20 ins

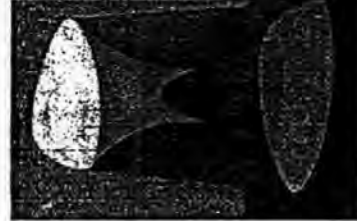


**JOHN TUNNARD** was born in Bedfordshire in 1900, and attended the Royal College of Art from 1919-23. He moved to Cornwall in 1930, having until this date worked as a commercial artist and taught at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and took up painting full-time, becoming a member of the London Group in the same year. During the war years he served as a coastguard at Cadgwith, and from 1948 taught design at Penzance School of Art. He designed a mural for the Festival of Britain in 1951, and from 1932 until his death in 1971 he exhibited in numerous one-man and mixed exhibitions internationally. His work is in numerous public collections, and was last exhibited in an Arts Council exhibition at the Newlyn Gallery, Penzance, in October 1977.

138. *Take Off 1945 - 6*  
oil on board  
20½ x 24 ins

139. *Sea Flower 1955*  
gouache  
15 x 22 ins

140. *Cliff Tops*  
gouache  
15 x 22 ins



**JOHN WELLS** was born in London in 1907, and first met Ben Nicholson with Christopher Wood in Cornwall in 1928. He studied medicine, and practised in the Scilly Isles until 1945, when he moved to Newlyn where he still lives, and took up painting full time. In 1946 he was a founder member of the Crypt Group, as well as sharing an exhibition at the Lefevre Gallery with Winifred Nicholson. He became a member of the Fenwith Society in 1949. One-man exhibitions include the Waddington Galleries, London, in 1960 and '64, and Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery in 1975. His work is included in many public collections, including, in London, the Tate Gallery, the Arts Council, the British Council and the Contemporary Art Society.

141. *Listening 1947*  
oil on board  
16 x 12 ins

146. *Aspiring Forms 1949*  
oil on board  
42 x 28 1/8 ins

142. *Painting 1947*  
oil on plywood  
30 x 11 ins

143. *Project 1952*  
oil on canvas  
41½ x 24½ ins

144. *Painting 1944*  
oil on plywood  
18½ x 18½ ins

145. *Axiel and Terrestrial 1953*  
oil on canvas  
24 x 20 ins



**BRYAN WYNTER** settled in Zennor, Cornwall in 1945. Born in London in 1915, he studied at the Slade School of Art from 1938-40. He was a co-founder both of the Crypt Group in 1946 and of the Penwith Society in 1949, and from 1951-6 taught at the Bath Academy of Art, Corsham. He held many one-man exhibitions in London, notably at the Redfern Gallery until 1957 and later at the Waddington Galleries. A large memorial exhibition was held at the Hayward Gallery in 1976, following his death the year before.

147. *Landscape with Gate 1945*  
gouache  
7½ x 11 ins

148. *Landscape with Mines 1946*  
gouache  
8½ x 11½ ins

149. *Landscape with Clay Workings 1946*  
gouache  
9¼ x 13¼ ins

150. *Dead Bird 1947*  
gouache  
14½ x 10 ins

151. *Nigh Landscape 1946*  
gouache  
9¼ x 13 ins

152. *Shrimp 1948*  
gouache  
5¼ x 8 ins

153. *Cliff with Boat 1952*  
gouache  
13 x 21 ins

154. *Still Life with Kipper 1948*  
oil on canvas  
30 x 20 ins

155. *Boats in Harbour 1952*  
oil on board  
19 x 25¼ ins

156. *Foresore with Gulls 1949*  
watercolour and bodycolour  
11¼ x 17¼ ins



**NAUM GABO** was born in 1890 in Russia leading exponent of constructivist art. From he worked with Kandinsky, Malevitch and 7 moving to Berlin, where he lived from 1921 moved to London, where, in addition to co. work as a sculptor, he worked with Leslie & Ben Nicholson on the publication of 'Circle he took part in the International Survey of Art, and from 1939-46 he lived in St. Ives, to the United States. His work is included in collections internationally, and was last exhibited in a retrospective Arts Council exhibition in

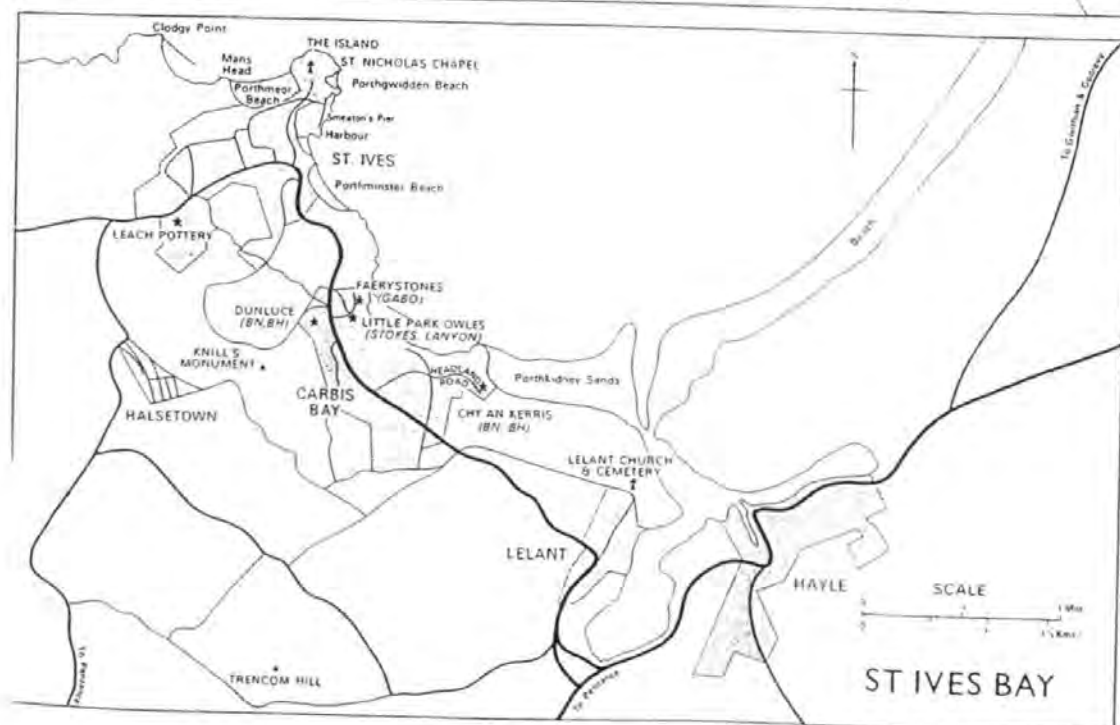
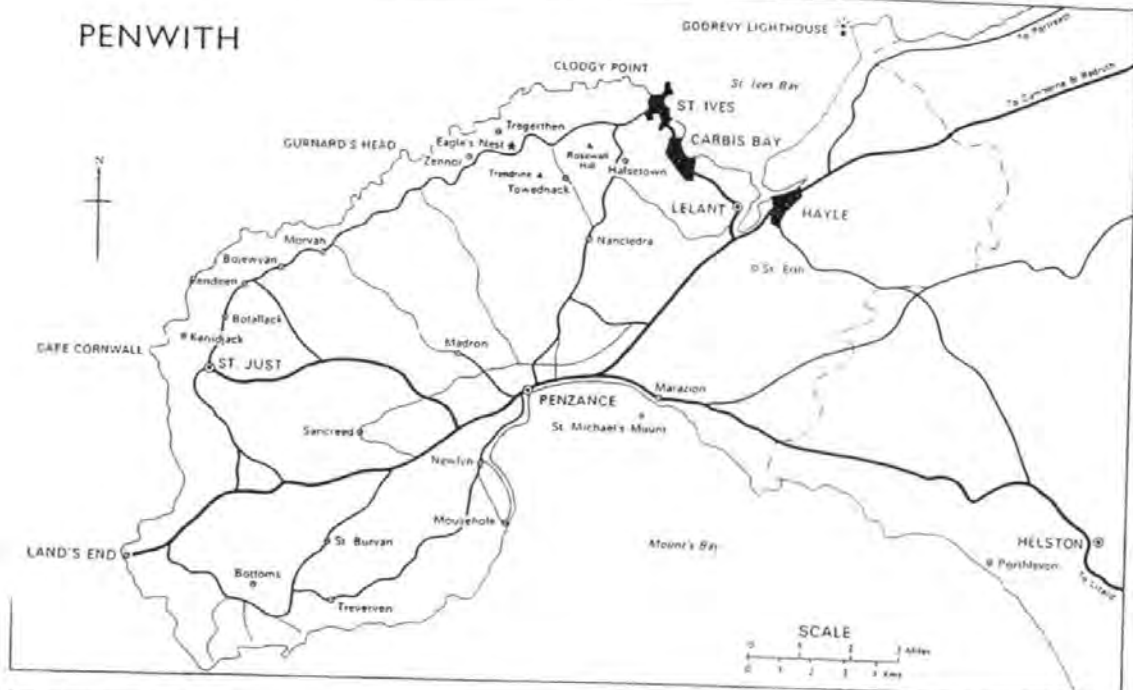
157. *Design*  
Aquatint  
10 1/8 x 8 5/8 ins

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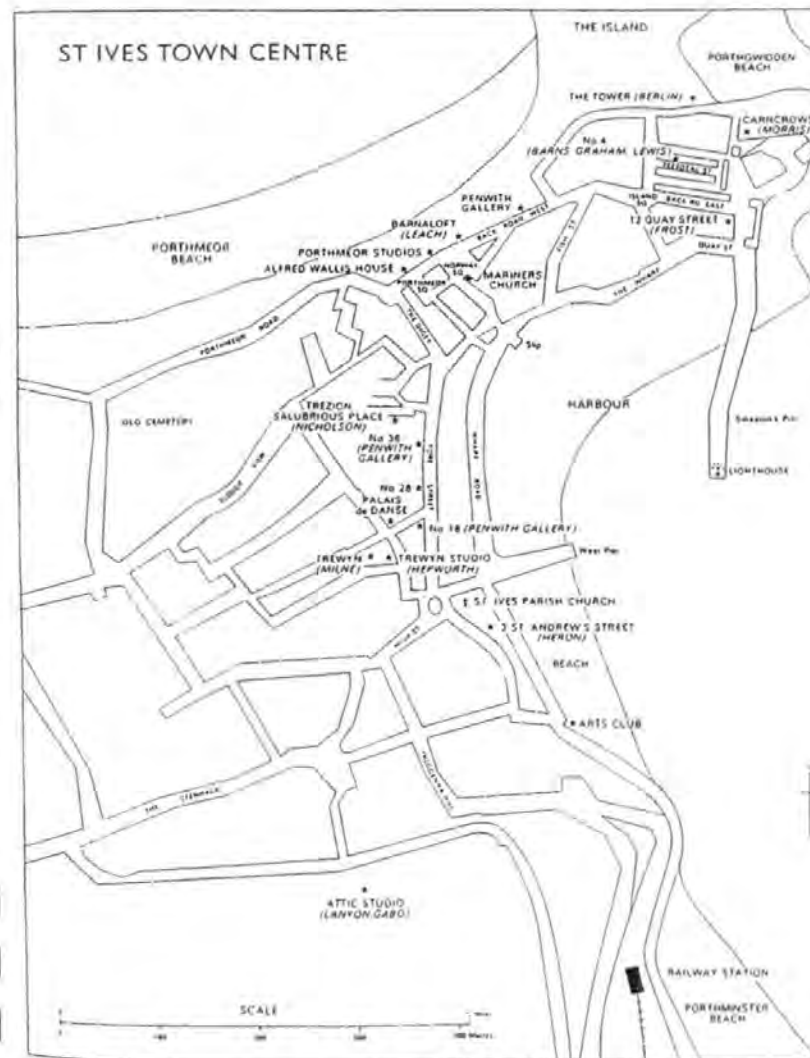
## Appendix 13

*St Ives* (1985) 'Contents'



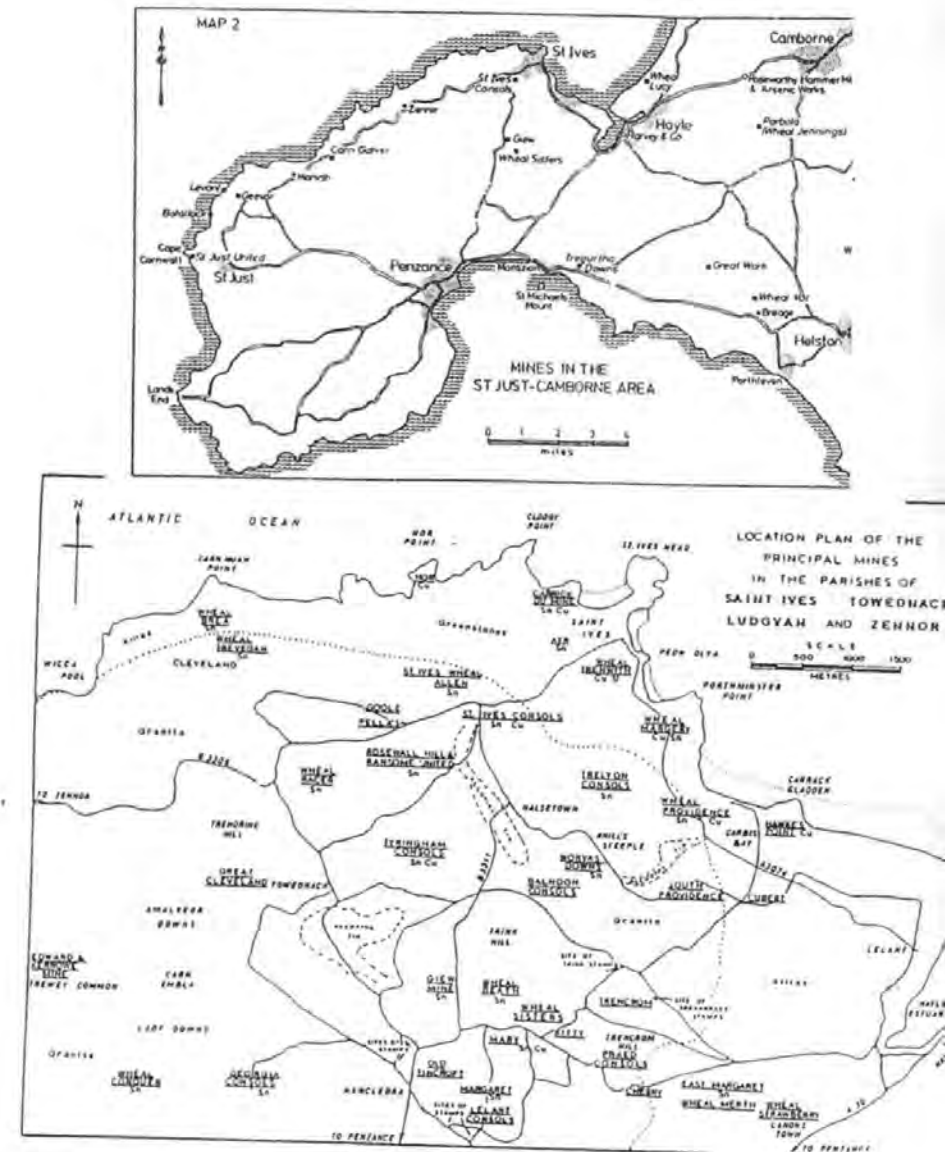
## Appendix 14

*St Ives* (1985) Maps of Penwith and St Ives Bay, p 10



Appendix 15

St Ives (1985) Maps of St Ives Town Centre. n 11



Appendix 16

Map of ores in St Ives and Carbis Bay



# Biography

1914	Born Wu-Kung-Fu, China, of Scottish parents
1915	Came to Scotland when aged one
1929-33	Edinburgh College of Art
1932-33	Andrew Grant Post Graduate Award (one year)
1933	Awarded One Year Travelling Scholarship, studied in Paris (with André Lhote)
1933-35	Travelled in Spain and Italy
1935-37	Fellowship at Edinburgh College of Art
1938	Euston Road School, London
1938	Married Adrian Stokes
1939	Mellis and Stokes moved to <i>Little Parc Owles</i> , Carbis Bay, near St Ives
1940-45	Constructivist period: worked in collage and relief carving
1945	Returned to painting
1946	Left Carbis Bay
1948	Married Francis Davison
1948-50	Moved to Cap d'Antibes, in the South of France
1950	Moved to Syleham, Suffolk
1963	Started to make colour structures
1970	Making colour reliefs
1976	Moved to Southwold in Suffolk
1978	Started to make driftwood constructions
	Lives and works in Southwold

## Solo Exhibitions

1958	The ALA Gallery, London
1959	The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
1967	University of East Anglia
1968	The Bear Lane Gallery, Oxford
1969	Grabowski Gallery, London
1970	Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh
	Stirling University
	Exeter University
1972	Basil Jacobs Gallery, London
1976	Compass Gallery, Glasgow
1982	The Pier Gallery, Stromness, Orkney
	The New '57 Gallery, Edinburgh
1987	Redfern Gallery, London

1990	Redfern Gallery, London
1994	<i>Recent Constructions</i> , Redfern Gallery, London
1997	Margaret Mellis: A Retrospective (touring)
	City Arts Centre, Edinburgh
	Kapil Jariwala Gallery, London
	The Pier Gallery, Stromness, Orkney
2001	Newlyn Art Gallery, Penzance
	Austin/Desmond Fine Art, London

## Selected Group Exhibitions

1942	<i>New Movements in Art, Contemporary Work in England</i> (Constructivist Section), London Museum, Lancaster House, London
1958	British Section of the International Guggenheim Award, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (touring to Brighton and Manchester)
1959-62	Waddington Galleries, London
1963-66	Hamilton Gallery, London
1963	John Moores Liverpool Exhibition 4
1965	John Moores Liverpool Exhibition 5
1966	Open Paintings Exhibition, Ulster Museum, Belfast
1967	Edinburgh Open 100
1971	Art Spectrum
1977	First Prize 1st Open East Anglian Exhibition, Norwich
	<i>Painting in Cornwall 1945-55</i> , New Art Centre, London
1978	<i>Objects</i> (Recent Acquisitions), Victoria & Albert Museum, London
	Pier Gallery Collection Exhibition, Tate Gallery, London
1982	<i>The Women's Art Show 1550-1970</i> , Castle Museum, Nottingham
1985	<i>St Ives 1939-64</i> , Tate Gallery, London
	International Art Fair, Olympia (Scottish Gallery, London)
	International Art Fair, Olympia (Redfern Gallery, London)

1989	<i>Scottish Art Since 1900</i> , Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh and The Barbican, London
1990	<i>Scottish Art 1900-1990</i> , The Scottish Gallery, London
	<i>Glasgow's Great British Art Exhibition</i> , McLellan Galleries, Glasgow
	<i>The Compass Contribution: 21 Years of Contemporary Art 1969-1990</i> , Tramway, Glasgow
1992	Margaret Mellis and Francis Davison, Gainsborough's House, Sudbury, Suffolk
	<i>Artists from Cornwall</i> , Royal West of England Academy, Bristol
1993	Inaugural Exhibition, Tate Gallery, St Ives
1996	Margaret Mellis and Francis Davison, Bede Gallery, Jarrow

## Public Collections

Arts Council of England  
 Contemporary Arts Society  
 Cornwall County Council  
 Eastern Arts Association  
 Ferens Art Gallery, Hull  
 Graves Collection, Sheffield  
 Government Art Collection  
 John Player Collection, Nottingham  
 Leicestershire, Nottingham (Trentbridge)  
 and Derby Education Committees  
 The Minories, Colchester  
 Museum Sztuki w Lodzi, Poland

Cat No	Title	Date	Medium	Size in Centimetres	Lender
1	Self Portrait	1935	oil on canvas	55 x 33	Artist
2	Regents Park	1938	oil on canvas	40.6 x 63.5	Artist
3	Palms and Olives, Rapallo	1938	oil on canvas	63.5 x 50.8	Artist
4	White Still Life	1939	oil on canvas	63.3 x 76.4	Private Collection
5	First Collage	1940	paper, printed cardboard, thread	24.2 x 29.5	Artist
6	Third Collage	1940	paper, transparent paper	22.2 x 29.1	Artist
7	Construction with Yellow Oval	1940	paper, ink, pencil	34.6 x 32.1	Artist
Keep 8	YKC Brown Construction	1940	cardboard, Bronco	31 x 25.5	Artist
Keep 9	Brown Construction	1941	cardboard, paper, chalk, Indian ink	28.5 x 28.9	Glasgow Museums, Art Gallery Museum, Kelvingrove
10	Collage: Blue, Green, Red, Pink	1941	cardboard, paper	32 x 21	Artist
11	Construction with Dark Red Oval	1941-2	papers, ink	24 x 36.5	Artist
Keep 12	Sobranie Collage	1942	paper collage on paper laid on board	26.3 x 37	Tate Gallery, Purchased 1985
13	Construction: Blue Ground	1942	paper, ink	22 x 29	Private Collection
14	Trees, Chateau des Enfants	1949-50	oil on canvas	73 x 60	Artist
15	Compotier on a Window Sill	c.1950	oil on canvas	39.5 x 31.5	Private Collection
16	Spotted Jug	c.1952	oil on canvas	65.5 x 54	Artist
17	Dark Fish	1953	oil on canvas	51 x 63.5	Artist

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in Centimetres

18	Still Life with Pears	c.1953	oil on canvas	53 x 51	Artist
19	Fish in Pan XX	c.1950	oil on canvas	40.5 x 63.5	Artist
20	Three Boats, Aldeburgh	c.1953	oil on board	50 x 75	Artist
21	Bottle and Landscape	c.1953-4	oil on canvas	50.8 x 63.5	Artist
22	Bottle and Snowfield X	c.1954	oil on canvas	61 x 45.5	Artist
23	Poppies and Onions ?	c.1954	oil on canvas	58.5 x 30.5	Artist
24	Mallet and Shadow XX	1954-5	oil on board	32.3 x 21.2	Artist
25	Bottles on Black Ground	1956	oil on canvas	63 x 76	Artist
26	Lighthouse C	1955	oil on board	35 x 50	Artist
Keep 27	Three Faded Flowers XX	1955-6	oil and housepaint on board	32.2 x 21	Glasgow Museums, Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove
Keep 28	Dead Anemones XX	1957	oil on board	38.3 x 38.5	Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney
29	Filled with Anemones X	1957	oil and housepaint on cardboard	73.3 x 37.5	Artist
30	Blind Girl with Fallen Flower C C	1956-8	oil and housepaint on board	75 x 62	Artist
31	Girl with White Flower (Black)?	c.1957	oil and housepaint on board	60.5 x 45.5	Artist
32	Drooping Flowers XX	c.1957	housepaint on board	43 x 56	Artist
33	Fallen Jar and Empty Tins XX	1957	oil and housepaint on board	58.5 x 48.5	Artist
34	Check Table cloth C	1957	housepaint on board	50 x 52.2	Artist

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## Appendix 18

List of exhibits in *Margaret Mellis Retrospective*, City Art Centre, Edinburgh,

June 21- July 23, 1997



Cat No	Title	Date	Medium	Size In Centimetres	Lender
35	Ships in the Night ?	1959-60	oil on canvas	70.5 x 91	Artist
36	Flowers and Leaves	1959	oil and housepaint on board	36 x 72.1	Artist
37	Flowers <sup>in</sup> and Three Glasses	c.1959	oil and housepaint on board	50 x 60	Artist
38	Blue Girl with Flower <sup>S</sup> X	1959-60	oil and housepaint on board	90.5 x 70.5	Artist
39	Blue Boat	c.1960	oil on canvas	51 x 61	Artist
40	Four Boats: Blue, Violet, Scarlet X	c.1960	oil on board		Artist
41	Three Boats	c.1960-2	paper collage	39.5 x 62.7	Artist
(5-57) 42	Rose, White Yellow	1963	oil on canvas	152 x 152	Artist
43	Oval Painting (Yellow, Orange, White, Violet)	c.1963-4	oil on board	122 x 91.2	Artist
44	Two Circles (Red, Blue, Yellow, Violet and White) go back	1964	oil on board	91.4 x 121.9	Artist <i>Return before exhib</i>
45	Dark Purple, Blues	1964 ?	oil on board	103.5 x 65	Arts Council Collection, Hayward Gallery, London
46	Crimson, Blue, Brown and Black	1960s ?	oil on canvas	91.5 x 101.5	Artist
47	Blues	1965 ?	oil on board	90.5 x 70.5	Artist
48	Big Black Diamond (Circular Structure)	1969 XX	oil on cotton duck	152.4 x 152.4 <i>5x5</i>	Artist
49	Blue, Scarlet, White, Violet and Orange	c.1969 ?	oil on board	91.2 x 122	Artist
50	Matchbox Relief	1952-70 C	oil on canvas on board	26.5 x 38 x 4	Artist
51	Moon Blue	1970 XX	canvas on board on painted canvas on hardboard	53.3 x 53.3	Artist

28 July 1997

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Margaret Mellis Retrospective: City Art Centre, Edinburgh: 21 June - 23 July 1997

Cat No	Title	Date	Medium	Size In Centimetres	Lender
52	Rose Diamond	1970	canvas on board on painted canvas on board on hardboard	58.4 x 58.4	Artist
53	Oblong Scarlet and Green	1970	canvas on board on canvas on hardboard	56.8 x 64.8	Artist
54	Double Black and White	1970	oil on canvas on board	58.5 x 58.5	Artist
55	In Black, In White	c.1970	oil on board	56 x 55.5	Artist
56	White Relief C	c.1970	oil on board on canvas on board	58 x 58 x 6	Artist
57	Three Purples	1972	oil on canvas over board, over painted canvas on board	58.2 x 58.2	Artist
58	Green Flower V	1971/2	oil on board	58 x 61	Artist
59	Oval Painting	1973	oil on board, mounted oval on canvas over hardboard	58.5 x 64.4	Artist
60	Pond	1974	oil on canvas, on painted canvas over board	53 x 61	Artist
61	House on Sand go back	1974-5	oil on unprimed canvas over hardboard over canvas on hardboard	63.5 x 57.7	Private Collection <i>matilda matilda had</i>
62	Burnt Out keep	1975/76	oil on canvas on hardboard	47.5 x 50.8	Glasgow Museums, Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove
X 63	Number Three keep	1980	found painted wood	63.5 x 90.8	Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney
64	Number Eight go back	1980	found painted wood	53.9 x 53.9 x 7	Scottish Art Council Collection
65	Number Ten X	1980	found painted wood	75.5 x 45 x 7.5	Artist
66	Number Eleven X keep	1980	found painted wood	55.5 x 59.5	Artist
RED 67	Number Thirteen X	1980	found painted wood	68.5 x 33 x 12.7	Artist
68	Number Seventeen go back	1980	found painted wood	33.7 x 30.5 x 7.3	Scottish Art Council Collection

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Cat No	Title	Date	Medium	Size in Centimetres	Lender
69	Resurrection	1985	found painted wood	46 x 23.8 x 20.3	Artist
70	Evening Walk <i>XX</i>	1986	found painted wood	37.5 x 51.5 x 6	Artist
71	Garden of Eden <i>XX</i>	1988	found painted wood	69.2 x 35 x 6.9	Artist
72	Dancing Man <i>XX</i>	1988-89	found painted wood	167 x 34.2 x 24.2	Artist
73	Sinking Boat <i>XX</i>	1989	found painted wood	43.8 x 62.8 x 6.7	Artist
74	047	1989	found painted wood	61 x 72.4 x 3.8	Artist
75	Bogman <i>C</i>	1990	found painted wood	16.7 x 49 x 9	Artist
76	Buffalo <i>XX</i>	1990	found painted wood	59 x 58 x 7	Artist
77	Bus <i>XX</i>	1990	found painted wood	48.9 x 47 x 6.4	Artist
78	Magician's Table <i>X</i>	1990	found painted wood	44 x 51 x 4.5	Artist
79	Winged Figure <i>X</i>	c.1990	found painted wood	55 x 33 x 7	Artist
80	Mad Gunman <i>?</i>	1990s	found painted wood	196 x 74 x 42.5	Artist
81	Cloud Cuckoo Land <i>?</i>	1991	found painted wood	79 x 100 x 11.5	Artist
82	Untitled: Rust and Yellow	1991	found painted wood	90 x 110 x 12.5	Artist
83	Sea <i>C</i>	1991	found painted wood	87 x 89.5 x 7.6	Artist
84	Heap <i>X</i>	1991	found painted wood	68 x 62.2 x 7	Artist
85	Father and Son <i>*FS</i> <i>✓</i>	1992	found painted wood	39.5 x 35.5 x 13	Artist

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## Margaret Mellis Retrospective: City Art Centre, Edinburgh: 21 June - 23 July 1997

Cat No	Title	Date	Medium	Size in Centimetres	Lender
86 <i>C</i>	Marsh Music	1992	found painted wood	167 x 80.5 x 11	Artist
<i>X</i> 87	Green Triangle, Grey Morning <i>freestanding</i>	1993 <i>✓</i>	found painted wood	82 x 87 x 14	Artist
88	Out <i>XXX</i>	1993 <i>XX</i>	found painted wood	63.5 x 48.5 x 15.5	Artist
89	In the Night <i>XXX</i>	1993 <i>X</i>	found painted wood	74 x 91 x 7	Artist
90	Mother & Son	1993	found painted wood	61 x 31 x 7	Artist
91	Shadows and Reflections	c.1993	found painted wood		Artist
92	Beached <i>XX</i>	1993-4 <i>XX</i>	found painted wood	49 x 53 x 7	Artist
93	Large Blue <i>X</i>	1993	found painted wood	118 x 92 x 9	Artist
94	Doorways <i>X</i>	1994	found painted wood	48.5 x 41.5 x 7	Artist
95	Face at the Window <i>X</i>	1994 <i>X</i>	found painted wood	91 x 54 x 11	Artist
<i>X</i> 96	Passing in the Night	1994	found painted wood	21.5 x 35 x 6	Artist
97	Oceanic	1994	found painted wood	79 x 80 x 8	Artist
98	Acrobat <i>freestanding</i>	1994-6	found painted wood		Artist
99	After the Fire <i>C</i>	1995 <i>C</i>	found painted wood	39.5 x 28.5 x 6	Artist
100	Icarus <i>✓</i>	1995 <i>X</i>	found painted wood	47 x 56 x 4.5	Artist
101	Bottom of the Deep Blue Sea <i>XXX</i>	1995 <i>XX</i>	found painted wood	89.5 x 150 x 7.5	Artist
102	Alchemist <i>X</i>	1995 <i>?</i>	found painted wood	145 x 58 x 8	Artist

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Cat No	Title	Date	Medium	Size in Centimetres	Lender
103	FRAIS - X	1995	found painted wood	45 x 60	Artist
104	On the Sea Shore XXX	1996	found painted wood	68 x 89.5 x 8	Artist
105	Giant X	1996	found painted wood	197 x 53.5 x 8	Artist
106	Paradise - Jungle C	1996	found painted wood	148 x 67 x 16	Artist
107	Mother and Child C	1996	found painted wood	40 x 23 x 8.5	Artist
108	S XX	1996	found painted wood	51 x 67 x 5	Artist
* 109	Free Sitting Figure XXX	1996-7	found painted wood	74 x 58.5 x 78	Artist
110	Happy XXX	1997	found painted wood	17.3 x 46 x 5 (7)	Artist
111	Underneath X	1997	found painted wood	67 x 46.5 x 6	Artist
112	Dead Flower XX	1997	found painted wood	75.5 x 53 x 7.5	Artist
113	Rocket XV	1997	found painted wood	120 x 77 x 8.5	Artist
114	F C	1997	found painted wood	148 x 144.5 x 8	Artist
* 115	Fouete F.S. X	1997	found painted wood	91 x 33 x 18	Artist
116	Dead Poppies, One Pink Petal X	1987	chalk on envelope	32 x 29.5	Artist
117	Dying Poppies: Grey Envelope X	1987	chalk on coloured envelope	31.5 x 34	Artist
118	White Colchicums on Black Envelope X	1989	chalk on coloured envelope	31 x 33.5	Artist
119	Pansies: Red Envelope X	1989	chalk on coloured envelope	32 x 29.5	Artist

...retrospective: City Art Centre, Edinburgh: 21 June - 23 July 1997

Cat No	Title	Date	Medium	Size in Centimetres	Lender
120	Blue and Yellow Pansies	1990	chalk on coloured envelope	29.5 x 32	Artist
121	Pansies: Brown Envelope	1990	chalk on coloured envelope	30 x 32	Artist
122	Auriculas in a Pot	1992	chalk on coloured envelope	31.5 x 34	Artist
123	Summer Flowers	1994	chalk on coloured envelope	42 x 35.5	Artist
124	Dead Rose: Blue Envelope X	1995	chalk on coloured envelope	35.5 x 42	Artist
125	Willow Herb and Teazle X	c. 1995-6	chalk on coloured envelope	36 x 42	Artist
126	Barley X	c. 1995-6	chalk on coloured envelope	42.5 x 41	Artist
127	Clematis and Lily	1996	chalk on coloured envelope	42 x 35.5	Artist

12 envelope drawings  
(which go together)



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## General Collection

Artists A-Z | Artists M | Mellis, Margaret

Search History  
New Search  
My Selections

◀ Previous Artist Next Artist ▶

**Mellis, Margaret** born 1914  
British

**Sobranie Collage**  
(1942)

☐ Add to Selection

**Blue Anemone**  
(1957)

☐ Add to Selection

**Marsh White**  
(circa 1972-5)

☐ Add to Selection

**Number Thirty Five**  
(1983)

☐ Add to Selection

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## Appendix 19

M. Mellis works in the Tate Gallery Collection

## General Collection

Artists A-Z | Artists M | Mellis, Margaret

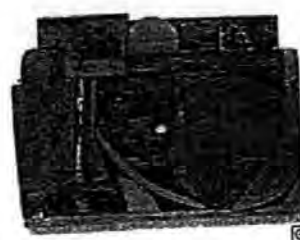
**Mellis, Margaret** born 1914  
British

**Number Thirty Five** 1983

Painted wood  
object: 540 x 755 x 60 mm  
relief  
Purchased 1987  
T04930

On display at Tate St Ives  
Display Theme: The Essential Image  
(until 13 October 2002)  
Room Name: Gallery 1

Cross-refer by subject  
Read the Display Caption



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## General Collection

Artists A-Z | Artists M | Mellis, Margaret

**Mellis, Margaret** born 1914  
British

**Marsh White** circa 1972-5

Oil on canvas laid on oil on board  
support: 569 x 619 mm  
painting  
Purchased 1987  
T04929

Cross-refer by subject  
Read the Display Caption



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## General Collection

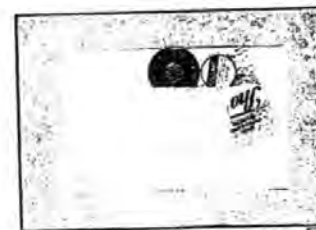
Artists A-Z | Artists M | Mellis, Margaret

**Mellis, Margaret** born 1914  
British

**Sobranie Collage** 1942

Collage on paper laid on board  
support: 263 x 370 mm  
on paper, unique  
Purchased 1985  
T04124

Cross-refer by subject  
Read the Full Catalogue Entry



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POSTAGE  
PAID  
1000



Copyright  
CARBIS BAY.

ST. IVE  
3  
CARBIS BAY.  
8 DEC  
1944  
LETTER CARD.

1000



Paul Nash  
106 Bantony Rd  
Oxford

76



POSTAGE  
PAID  
1000

# Appendix 20

Ben Nicholson post card to Paul Nash from Carbis Bay

## Pandora's Red Box

I spent a horrible lonely evening in an empty flat with nothing to eat. The party was next door, I had been excluded, although I knew the hostess well.

Next morning, going to the train, I saw a curious red box lying in the middle of the road, lid in air. I immediately imagined filling it with bright colours which would jamb the door so that it could never shut again.

I put the box in my studio. Red is a lovely colour, it harmonizes all the other colours and eats the dirt (transforms dirt to tone). Suddenly pieces of painted wood came out of my wood pile and went into the box like a swarm of bees. The door was jammed open forever.

When everything stopped happening I thought of Pandora. This was another version of Pandora's Box.

Margaret Mellis  
Southwold

16.vii.1995

## Appendix 21

Mellis notes on *Pandora's Red Box*

I don't agree with everything he says! He doesn't understand about 'hovering between'. It is what Raza & to do at the end of his life. It is the most powerful position you can be in. (But spectators don't seem to understand!)

Driftwood / John Synge

THE LONDON MAGAZINE 109  
FEB-MARCH 1991

JOHN SYNGE

Driftwood

Margaret Mellis/Albert Houthuizen

Commenting on two of her relief constructions in Glasgow's 'Great British Art 1990' exhibition Margaret Mellis denies as irrelevant any distinction between the abstract and figurative content of her work. 'Hovering above the two,' she claims, 'allows double scope and freedom - construction and colour lock together. This is what I have been groping towards since the beginning.' Mellis has hovered between rather than above and has now landed, anyway in her own mind, on the figurative shore. She knows quite well that she cannot, as she suggests in the Glasgow catalogue, 'both have her cake and eat it.'

The beginning for Mellis was in the late 30s when, married to Adrian Stokes, she settled with him in Carbis Bay just round a small headland from St Ives. She was 25 and had been from childhood a painter of landscape and still life, having studied in Edinburgh, Paris and London. In 1939 St Ives, already home to many artists, became a small but concentrated refuge for painters and sculptors whose influence would reach far beyond the war years. Naum Gabo moved there from London in 1938, soon followed by Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth, then married with young triplets. Invited by Adrian Stokes, who had written about Nicholson,

son, the family moved in for six cramped months. Mondrian, also invited, chose to stay in Hampstead and risk the bombs that soon fell about him. With Gabo just down the road, and Nicholson and Hepworth in upstairs rooms Mellis found herself in the centre of artistic debate and experience. She began to learn about abstraction in painting, collage and constructivism.

No artist, except perhaps Mondrian, has written more concisely about abstract art than Gabo. In considering Mellis's comments on her own work, it is relevant to quote a definition she would have read in his 'The Constructive Idea in Art': 'It reveals a universal law that the elements of a visual art, such as lines, colours, shapes, possess their own forces of expression independent of any association with the external aspects of the world ... they are not merely abstract signs but they are immediately and organically bound up with human emotions.' Acceptable or not, the definition is clear: no hovering, either above or between. In such debate and practice Mellis learned to extend her innate sense of form and colour.

Margaret Mellis has lived nearly all her life by the sea. Now in her ... she has settled in Southwold, on the Suffolk coast, where she continues her work, figurative or part-abstract, with astonishing variety and persistence. In her recent exhibition at the Redfern the main room was hung with relief constructions which, when you first see them, have all the appearance of abstraction. They are put together, screwed and glued, with pieces of driftwood picked up along the beach near

## Appendix 22

Mellis note about 'hovering', in-between spaces, 1991

# Wilhelmina Barns-Graham CBE HRSA HRSW

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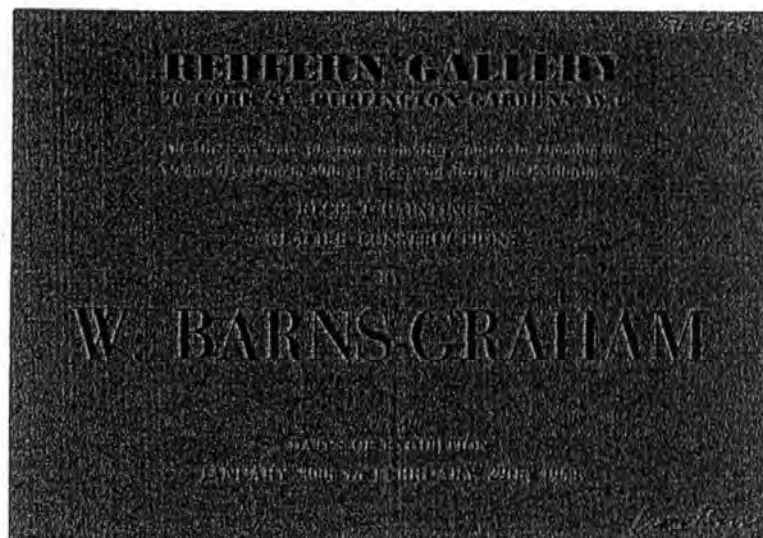
- 1912 Born St Andrews, Fife
- 1924 Family moved to Stirlingshire
- 1930 Visited Paris and Rouen
- 1932 Edinburgh College of Art, Diploma course (Painting) DAE
- 1933-34 Studio at St Andrews, while recovering from illness
- 1934-37 Continued at Edinburgh College of Art
- 1936-40 Studio at 5 Alva Street, Edinburgh
- 1939 Worked in Scotland (Aviemore and Rothiemurchus)
- 1940 Went to Cornwall with award as recommended by Hubert Wellington. Met Adrian Stokes, Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Naum and Miriam Gabo, Herbert Read, Borlase Smart, John and Elizabeth Summerson, Margaret Gardiner, Bernard Leach and Alfred Wallis.  
Moved into No. 3 Porthmeor Studios
- 1942 Became member of Newlyn Society of Artists and St Ives Society of Artists.  
Met John Wells and Bryan Winter
- 1943 Introduced Borlase Smart to Nicholson and Hepworth
- 1945 Private teaching (1945-47)  
Moved to No. 1 Porthmeor Studios  
First met David Haughton and Guido Morris
- 1946 First meetings of Crypt Group in her studio
- 1947-48 Crypt Group second and third exhibitions  
Met David Lewis (married 1949)
- 1948 Worked on glacier drawings and gouaches in Switzerland
- 1949 Worked in Paris  
Founder member of the Penwith Society of Artists  
Resigned from the St Ives Society of Artists with 16 others
- 1951 Worked in Italy and Scilly Isles

## Appendix 23

W. Barns-Graham biographical notes

1954	<p>Travelled to Paris with David Lewis and Roger Hilton</p> <p>With Nicholson, visited the director of <i>Aujourd'hui</i> at his glass-wall house</p> <p>Visited Veira de Silva</p> <p>Travelled to Venice, met Peggy Guggenheim</p> <p>Worked in Tuscany</p>
1955	<p>Worked in Tuscany, Calabria and Sicily</p> <p>Met Poliakoff, Istrati and Michel Seuphor, visited studios of Brancusi, Arp, Giacometti and Pevsner</p>
1956-57	On staff of Leeds School of Art
1958	Worked in Spain, France and the Balearics
1960	Inherited a house, near St Andrews
1960-63	Studio in London
1963	Returned to St Ives
1963-65	Worked in Scotland and St Ives
1966	Visit to Amsterdam and Rotterdam
1967	Visit to America
1973	Working in St Ives and St Andrews
1984-85	Working in Orkney
1989-90	Working in Lanzarote
1991	Visit to Barcelona
1991-92	Working in Lanzarote
1992	<p>Received Honorary Doctorate, University of St. Andrews and</p> <p>Honorary Member Penwith Society and Newlyn Society</p>
1999	Honorary Member RSA and RSW and Scottish Arts Club
2000	Received Honorary Doctorate, University of Plymouth
2001	<p>Awarded CBE</p> <p>Awarded Honorary Doctorate, University of Exeter</p>
1987 to present	Working in St. Ives and St. Andrews





## Appendix 24

W. Barnes-Graham invitation to Redfern Gallery, *Glacier Constructions* exhibition, January 30<sup>th</sup> - February 29<sup>th</sup>, 1952



## Appendix 25

Layout for invitation of *British Abstract Art I*, 1994. Flowers East Gallery, London



## Search Results

General Collection | Artist A-Z | Artists B | Barns-Graham, Wilhelmina

8 matches found, items 1 to 8 displayed

Refine Search | Search History | View Selections

- 1 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham  
Island Sheds, St Ives No. 1 (1940)

T07546

☐ Add to Selection

- 2 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham  
Glacier Crystal, Grindelwald (1950)

T00708

☐ Add to Selection



- 3 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham  
Composition February I (1954)

T02237

☐ Add to Selection



- 4 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham  
Red Form (1954)

T02238 [View Display](#)

☐ Add to Selection



- 5 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham  
Linear Abstract (1958)

P77577

☐ Add to Selection



- 6 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham  
Eight Lines, Porthmeor (1986)

T07528

☐ Add to Selection

- 7 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham  
Lava Movement, La Geria (1993)

T07547

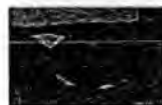
☐ Add to Selection



- 8 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham  
June Painting, Ultramarine and Yellow (1996)

T07529

☐ Add to Selection



Compiled Thu Dec 19 14:42:07 GMT 2002  
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## General Collection

Artists A-Z | Artists B | Barns-Graham, Wilhelmina

Barns-Graham, Wilhelmina born 1912  
British

June Painting, Ultramarine and  
Yellow 1996

Acrylic on canvas  
support: 1375 x 2082 x 38 mm  
painting  
Presented by Tate Friends St Ives  
1999  
T07529

Cross-refer by subject  
Read the Technique and Condition  
Text

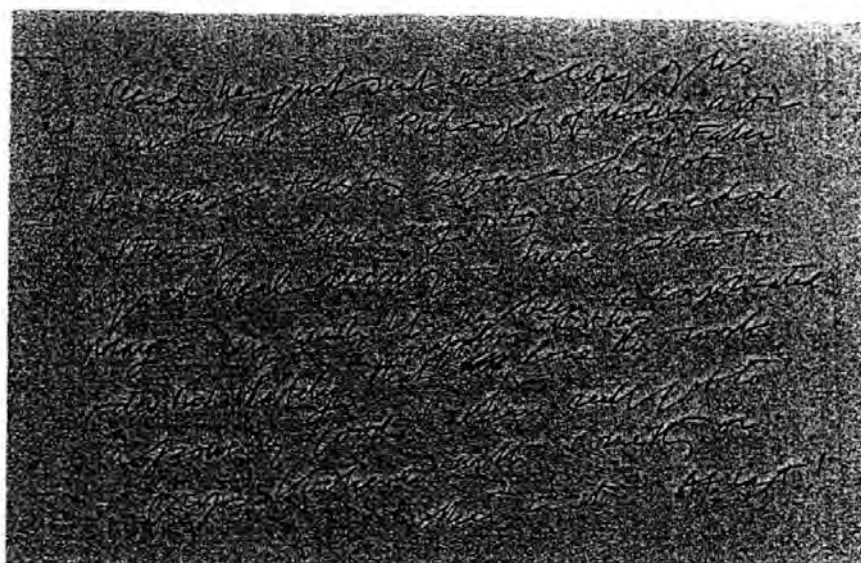
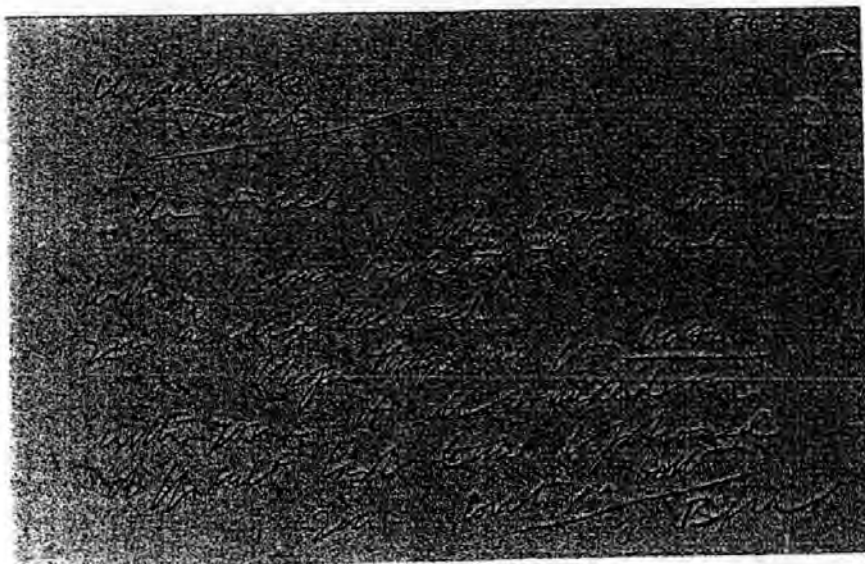


© The Artist

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## Appendix 26

List of Barns-Graham's works in the Tate Gallery collection



## Appendix 27

Ben Nicholson's letter recommending the work of Barns-Graham, *Glacier*

*Constructions* exhibition, 1952, TGA 876.5.38.



## Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall

**T**HE FIRST AIM of the Society is to encourage the vitality and unity of contemporary Free and Applied Arts capable of exhibition.

In essential structure the Society differs from other societies. Its total Membership remains constant at forty artist- and ten craftsman-Members; but fluidity is ensured by a system of biennial election. By this system, all Members automatically retire every two years, and a new Membership is elected by vote from among the number of the retiring Members *plus* such non-Members, not exceeding ten, whose work may have been proposed by some Member and have been twice exhibited by the Society.

No Member, therefore, can claim any proprietary right, either to be re-included in the Society at an election, or to exhibit in the Society's exhibitions. The method of re-election moreover, promises continued vitality, from the probability of new Members being admitted.

**T**HE SECOND AIM of the Society is to encourage and foster a practical interest in all the other Arts, by lectures, recitals, and similar functions to be held in the Society's gallery throughout the year—the Society in these matters acting in full co-operation with other societies having also this aim in view.

For the realisation of this second aim, the Society needs the active participation, as Lay Members, of everyone interested in music, poetry, film and dance, and who will contribute to a free exchange of ideas, and help to promote in the future such original work as rightly belongs to a vital community.

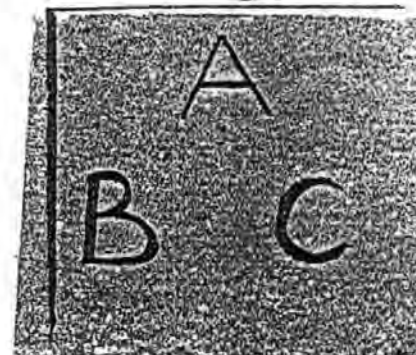
The Subscription for Lay Membership is five shillings per annum, payable to the Honorary Treasurer, G. R. Downing, Esq., The Bookshop, Fore Street, Saint Ives, Cornwall.

Offers of practical support and of further financial help will be welcomed.

## THE PENWITH SOCIETY OF ARTS IN CORNWALL

Penwith Gallery  
Fore Street  
St Ives

### Rules and Bye-Laws



FOUNDED AS A TRIBUTE TO BORLASE SMART

## Appendix 29

Penwith Society: a) Declaration sheet sent to prospect supporters; b) internal

Bye Law and Rules for members of the Society

# PENWITH SOCIETY

## OF ARTS IN CORNWALL

### Rules

1. *Title.* (a) The Society shall be called "The Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall." (b) Every catalogue of the Society's exhibitions shall contain the following words:—"Founded as a tribute to Borlase Smart."

2. *Objects.* The furtherance of the Arts in Cornwall.

3. *Constitution.* The Society shall comprise:—  
1. President. 2. Working Members. (a) Artist Members. (b) Craftsmen Members. 3. Honorary Lay Members. Life Lay Members. Lay Members.

4. *Government.* The government of the Society shall be vested in Officers and Committee composed of the following:—(1) The President; (2) The Chairman; (3) The Honorary Secretary; (4) The Honorary Treasurer; (5) Six Artists and Craftsmen Members; (6) Co-Opted Members. The Chairman and Honorary Secretary shall retire after their first two years of office. Neither shall be eligible for re-election until after the lapse of two years from the date of relinquishing office. But, in order to avoid both officers retiring in the same year, for the purposes of this rule, the term of office of the Honorary Secretary shall be considered as dating from 1st January 1948. The retirement and election of these Officers shall take place at the Annual General Meeting, and this shall be held as near as possible to 1st January in each year. The Committee of the Society shall retire annually, but shall be eligible for re-election. Five members shall form a quorum. The Chairman shall have a second or casting vote. By a majority vote, taken at a General Meeting, any Officer may be relieved of his or her office.

5. *Meetings.* The Society shall hold four quarterly General Meetings each year. The fourth of these shall be termed the Annual General Meeting, when the election of



Officers and Committee shall take place. A biennial election for Members shall also take place at the Annual General Meeting, and shall precede the election of Officers and Committee on the Agenda. Notice convening these meetings must be sent to all Members of the Society seven clear days in advance of the date fixed for the meetings. Members must receive fourteen days' notice of Annual General Meetings.

6. **Membership.** (a) Working Membership of the Society shall be limited to those practising any of the following:—Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Arts, Crafts as defined in the Byelaws, and the number of Members shall not exceed forty of which not more than ten shall be craftsmen. The Artist Membership shall be divided into two equal groups: (I) Group A (15). (II) Group B (15) which terms shall be defined in the Byelaws. (b) Lay Membership.

7. **Elections.** (a) Working Members shall retire and shall be eligible for re-election at two-yearly intervals dating from the inception of the Society. Members shall submit themselves for election by the Group A, B, or Craftsmen to which they wish to belong. Non-members shall submit themselves for election by the Group to which they apply. The names of all candidates shall appear on the Agenda calling the General Meeting at which they will come up for election. Vacancies in any of the Groups need not be filled. (b) The retiring Members before retiring shall submit for the election of new Members from their own ranks and from non-member candidates. The number of such candidates shall not exceed a proportion of one non-member to four Members. Candidates' work must have been accepted by the Hanging Committee and hung in two previous exhibitions of the Society. Should a larger proportion than one other non-member to every four Members present themselves for election, the Members of the Society shall first ballot for the requisite number of candidates. (c) Should a vacancy or a number of vacancies occur in the Membership during a two-year period, Members of the Society may ballot to fill the vacancy or vacancies from candidates who have had their work accepted by the Hanging Committee and hung in two previous exhibitions of the Society, but Members elected under this rule shall retire and submit themselves to re-election with the other Members of the Society at the end of the current two-yearly period.

8. **Privileged Members.** (a) Each Member shall have the privilege of submitting works up to a number to be de-

termined by the Hanging Committee for each exhibition, from which the Hanging Committee will at its discretion select. The Hanging Committee will have the right by a majority vote to include or reject any or all of the works submitted by any Member. The amount of space to be allotted to Members whose work may be accepted will be determined by the Hanging Committee for each exhibition. In the event of space being available through the rejection by the Hanging Committee of a number of works, the Hanging Committee shall have the power to include additional works by other exhibitors to fill this space. No member of the Hanging Committee shall vote on his or her own work. (b) Each Member may invite one non-member to submit two works for selection by the Hanging Committee of each exhibition. The Member's name must appear on the label attached to the work. The Member shall be chargeable for the hanging fee. (c) Members unable to attend a General Meeting shall be entitled to (i) appoint a proxy to vote for them, (ii) vote in writing. No Member may accept more than one proxy vote.

9. All Members shall abide by the laws of the Society.

10. **Hanging Committee.** A new Hanging Committee shall be elected for each exhibition, the election to take place at the General Meeting preceding the exhibition. The Hanging Committee shall consist of two Group A and two Group B artists, one sculptor, and two craftsmen. The Chairman shall, *ex officio*, be a member of the Hanging Committee, the group to which he belongs being taken into account in electing the Committee. Members may submit work in more than one Group. Voting of Hanging Committee. Each member of the Hanging Committee shall have one vote on each work, with a second vote on each work in his or her own Group. The Chairman shall have a casting vote when necessary. *Co-opting.* The Hanging Committee may co-opt additional members to replace absent members, according to their Groups, and an additional sculptor if necessary. Each working member of the Society shall have the privilege, in alphabetical order, of serving on the Hanging Committee.

11. **Alteration of rules and bye-laws.** (a) The Rules constituting the basis of the Society shall not be varied, altered, or rescinded unless by the consent of two successive General Meetings held at a minimum interval of two weeks. (b) The Committee may from time to time make, revoke,

alter or amend any Bye-law for any purpose except as otherwise provided in these Rules.

12. **Subscriptions.** Full Members shall pay an annual subscription of £1 10s. Lay Members shall pay an annual subscription of 5s. These shall be due on 1st January. In the event of a Member's subscription not being paid his or her work may not be hung in any exhibitions of the Society. Non-members shall pay a hanging fee of 5s. on each work hung in an exhibition of the Society.

13. The Society shall never pay any dividend or make any gift, division or bonus in money unto or between any of its Members.

14. **Disputes, etc.** Any Member declared by the Committee to be guilty of conduct prejudicial to the interests and well-being of the Society may be suspended by the Committee, who shall refer the matter to a General Meeting which may expel the Member concerned.

15. The Society shall not affiliate itself with any other body or Society without a two-thirds majority vote in favour of such affiliation taken at a General Meeting.

16. The Society may from time to time sponsor additional exhibitions or other cultural activities.

17. The annual subscriptions of Lay Members shall entitle them (a) to free admission to whatever exhibitions the Society shall organise from time to time; (b) to attend and speak at the General Meetings of the Society, but not to vote. They shall, however, have the right to vote if they are appointed to any sub-committee of the Society provided that the terms of reference of the particular sub-committee allow such a right.

18. An Extraordinary General Meeting may be requested by two Working Members, who shall inform the Honorary Secretary, in writing, of the purpose for which the meeting is to be called.

## Bye-Laws

1. **Exhibitions.** (a) There shall be normally two separate exhibitions in each year, one to be held during the months of April, May and June, and the other during the months of July, August and September. (b) No work shall be removed before the end of the exhibition without the sanction of the Hanging Committee. (c) Work replacing sales must be approved by the Hanging Committee. (d) No oil painting may be catalogued at a price less than £5. (e) It shall be in the discretion of the Hanging Committee to invite such works in private ownership as may be considered to be of value or interest in an exhibition of the Society. (f) *Commission on Sales.* A commission of 15 per cent shall be charged to exhibitors on exhibits sold at an exhibition of the Society. A commission of 7 per cent shall be charged to exhibitors on repeat orders of prints and crafts, and on orders resulting from written introductions given by the Society. (g) Whenever possible, one month's notice of exhibitions shall be given to Members.

2. **General Meetings.** The seats provided at General Meetings shall be definitely grouped: (a) The Officers and Committee in one group. (b) Working Members and Lay Members in separate clearly defined groups.

3. **Assemblies.** An Assembly of Working Members may be called by the Committee at any time for the discussion of professional matters in order that recommendation may be put before the next General Meeting.

4. New Members shall be limited to those resident or producing work in Cornwall. In the event of a Member leaving Cornwall for a period of over two years from the date of the last acceptance of work for exhibition, he or she will not be eligible for re-election.

5. **Working Members' Groups.** A. Artists primarily aiming at a representational form of art. B. Artists primarily aiming at an abstract form of art. C. Craftsmen whose work shows a creative element; design and execution being unified and the work being carried out mainly by hand and with due regard to the nature of the material and the tools employed.

Transcript of pp 57-61 of PSAC Minutes TAM 76/1

(Whenever I could not decipher accurately the text I either surrounded the word with {} or marked after it [?].)

Committee Meeting 1<sup>st</sup> March 1950, at PG at 8 pm till 10.20

Present: Chair, Hon. Sec., Hon. Tres., Miss Hepworth, Miss BG, Peile, BN, Mr. Keeley, Mr Mitchell and David Leach. Mr. Halliday's apologies for absence were conveyed.

-The chairman: Remarks pertaining to the GM. "He considered that the notion put forward by Mr. W Arnold foster was founded upon the assumption that the last committee had failed to do everything possible to keep in the society those four members who had resigned. He had no doubt that Mr Arnold Foster would revise his opinion when he met those members personally & attempted reconciliation."

-Mr Keeley: attended to letters from Messrs Morris, val Baker & Segal due to appear in the local press & suggested that the Society took no action in the matter.

5. A) Miss Hepworth: "...apropos the GM, that some legislation might be provided to restrict the reading to any general Meeting of letters addressed to the Hon. Sec & the Committee, Mr Keeley said that he thought that in any event to force the committee to commit to a General Meeting letters which they felt ought not to be read was to imply a vote of no confidence: it's [?] implication would be deterrent [?] enough."

B) Mr Nicholson "Suggested that at the next General Meeting Rule 17 should be read to lay members, to remind them that upon professional matters they had no vote & that at the last GM this voting was out of order. Carried.

The 1951 Exhibition, a) BH suggested the in view of the importance to the Arts Council that the Penwith Society should be stable and running smoothly, a grant before 1951 was probable. The Arts Council representative dealing with Regional Matters was Mrs Mclean. b) BH reported her attendant meeting at the Guildhall St Ives to discuss the 1951 exhibition & St Ives effort. In her view there are 3 points: 1. The General Public, 2. All St Ives artists, 3. The Penwith Society. Re Penwith Society she put forward these suggestions: 1) "By example, the Penwith Society should aim at stimulating general creative energy throughout the town. 2) that Penwith should aim at leaving a [P 59] substantial legacy to the town in the form of paintings, town planning & architectural reform etc. 3) During the Summer months of 1951 The Penwith should hold two exhibitions, a Spring & Summer show each lasting 3 months. In the first exhibition a competition for a large painting by any painter should be conducted, one pointing to be selected [?] presented to the town as a permanent legacy. For the purchase of that painting a fund should be started: further money would be raised by organising dances, & like activities. That trustees of the Porthmeor Studios should be made judges, smaller paintings for sale should be shown with the larger paintings to complete the competitions [?]. 4) In the second exhibition an open

competition should be conducted for designs by the General Public: suggestions for design, garden seats, terrace seats, public shelters etc. This would encourage a creative link between the arts & everyday life. Designers must be members of the community. 5) At some time an exhibition of children's work should be held: six of the best works shown should be included in the main Penwith exhibition of the children made lay members of the Society.

These last 3 suggestions should be communicated to the St Ives Society of Artists to enable them to conduct similar competitions simultaneously.

6) The Town should be considered as a Guild: everyone would have an opportunity of doing something constructive for the town as a whole. Such a comprehensive effort would bring colossal moral & financial reward to St Ives.

7) An Exhibition of Crafts should be organised to be held at hall, showing every kink of craft peculiar to the town. Every town has its own creative sensibility in craftsmanship & that of St Ives should be encouraged.

8) The everyday life of the Town to be improved: that show-window displays, painting of shop fronts improving streets & gardens, making window-boxes to be encouraged.

9) That the Penwith Society as a body of artists be prepared to advise anyone wanting opinion.

10) That a special Penwith Society Festival Committee should be formed under a Committee liaison officer. Miss Hepworth put forward the name of Mr Peter Lanyon.

"The following Amendments were suggested.

1. Mr Nicholson suggested that the Town should receive a large painting from both the Penwith Society & the St Ives Society of Artists.

2. Mr Lewis suggested that Public Companies such as the Western National, should be approached about adopting new colour schemes for Public buildings.

3. It was carried [note the impersonal when it is neither BN or DL who is suggesting!] Miss Hepworth should approach the St Ives Society of Artists on issues on which both societies overlap.

4. Miss Peile suggested a visitors competition: that the Penwith Society should be a receiving station for visitors comments & proposals.

5. Miss Hepworth suggested the formation of a 'Festival News' column in the local press.

6. Miss Hepworth suggested that trades should be asked to cooperate with competitions & ornaments by way of self-advertisement.

7. Mr Downing suggested that [?] Committee members with any further suggestions should communicate with Miss Hepworth before the 22 March.

7. Mr Downing made no report regarding negotiations with the Film Society.

8. The proposal by Mr Robin Nance referred to his committee from the hangin Committee "that no member of A or B group may sponsor a craft, & that no member of C group may sponsor a painting or sculpture" was discussed & rejected."

9. The Hon. Sec. to write Lady Mander to discover whether the pictures of members of the PS were being exhibited in the National Book League, London

10. Considered the letter of resignation by Miss Isabel Heath & decided to take action until Miss Heath had discussed the matter with the Chairman & Mr Arn Foster.

11. Two letters from Mr Peter Lanyon were read, and the Hon. Sec. was asked to write to him saying that no note [?] of censure [?] was proposed or taken against him, & that the Committee did not consider [?] that any [xxx] breach [?] of the w and carried. The Committee [xxxx] but to [xx] it considered Mr Lanyon the best [xxxxxx] Penwith members to conduct the liaison work for the 1951 Festival, and asked that Mr Lanyon discuss the matter with Miss Hepworth before making a decision.

12. Mr Keeley read a circular by Mr Denys val Baker advertising his publication of a book entitled Painting from Cornwall. It was decided that in view of the fact that it was not a Penwith matter; painters should write to him individually re. the copyright fees, or withdrawal of copyright.

## Appendix 30

Minutes from PSAC discussion about local activities of the 1951 festival



PENWITH SOCIETY OF ARTS IN CORNWALL.

A General Meeting has already been called for 8 p.m. on Tuesday, 29th. November at the Penwith Gallery, to confirm the amendments and additions to the Rules passed by the General Meeting held on Tuesday, 15th. November.  
A copy of these, as passed, is attached.

Members will notify the Hon. Secretary at the coming meeting, or IN WRITING BEFOREHAND, of the group to which they wish to belong. ~~(Any Member failing to do so will be voted into a group by the working Members present at the meeting.)~~

For the information of Members, who were not present on 15th. November, it should be explained that no satisfactory term was found to denote the difference in outlook of group A and group B. The following terms were suggested and give some indication of the division:-

A	B
Traditional -----	Contemporary
Representational -----	Abstract
"Port" -----	"Starboard"
Right -----	Left
"Ancient" -----	"Modern"

Craftsmen naturally fall into group C.

The purpose of this division is to ensure a fair representation on the Hanging Committees and to prevent more than 15 of the 30 vacancies for Artist Members at an election being filled by one school of thought.

It is, therefore, an administrative measure rather than an arbitrary ruling. It should be noted that Members may submit work to a Hanging Committee in more than one group, and each work will receive the benefit of the extra votes in the group to which it is sent.

SHEARER ARMSTRONG.

Hon. Secretary

*Th: 16<sup>th</sup> December 1946  
Bowen House  
P. 10.00*

Appendix 31

Circular from PSAC with binary oppositions



Appendix 32

A detail of The Crypt Group photograph with poster about Scottish Artists exhibiting in France

# PENWITH SOCIETY OF ARTS IN CORNWALL

## First Exhibition

Summer 1949

SAINT IVES  
PUBLIC HALL FORE STREET

### SAINT IVES

Printed by Messrs JAMES LANHAM LIMITED, in collaboration  
with Guido Morris

#### LIST OF MEMBERS

- \* Shearer Armstrong
- W Arnold-Foster
- \* Garlick Barnes
- Wilhelmina Barnes-Graham
- Dorothy Bayley
- Sven Berlin
- Archibald Carne
- \* David Cox ARWA
- Agnes Drey
- T E C Early
- \* Leonard J Fuller RCSI RCA
- David Hargrave
- Isobel Heath
- \* Barbara Hopworth
- Marion Hocken FRS FRSI
- Mary Jewell
- Hilda Jillard
- Peter Lanyon
- \* Bernard Leach FRSA
- David Leach
- Jeanne de Mauriac
- Denis Mitchell
- Alice Moore
- \* Guido Morris
- Marjorie Mortyn
- Dixon Nance
- Robin Nance
- Ben Nicholson
- Miriam Peile
- R G Perry
- Dod Procter R.A.
- W Sifton (Fah)
- \* H Segal
- Barbara Tribe
- John Wells
- Bryon Wynter
- \* Present Hanging Committee

PENWITH has attracted artists since the close of the last century, and Saint Ives is the largest and best known art centre in the province. This rocky peninsula has stimulated our imagination; we who are not Cornish are under a debt to this land and people. We can repay it by producing art which reflects some part of what we receive, and by an appreciation of the born character of Cornish art and artists. Amongst the latter a place apart should be given to the local primitive, Alfred Wallis, who gave such direct and naive expression to the character of West Penwith.

The presence during and after the war years of several artists of international standing has been a powerful stimulus to Saint Ives; but the new Society owes a special debt, and perhaps its existence, to a traditional painter, the late Borlase Smart, because he was broad in outlook and (at a time when it was unpopular to do so) made room for the modern, and encouraged young artists with fresh ideas. It is on his ideas of progress that the new Society has broken away from the old. The Society proposes to carry these ideas forward by including in its membership good craftsmen and traditional artists as well as representatives of newer movements. It is entirely opposed to exclusiveness and antagonism. Its gallery—the old Public Hall in Fore Street—will be a focus, moreover, for lay members and for other Societies with like ideals—where art may be seen, heard, encouraged and discussed.

The developments of modern art, reflected in such movements as Post Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Vorticism, Constructivism, Surrealism and Abstract Art, have been so rapid in succession and so varied in their content as to make division of allegiance inevitable. Yet a thread of continuity exists which in fifty years time will be more evident than it is now. Varied degrees of abstraction and emphasis have always been the means whereby artists, and more particularly craftsmen, have expressed their feelings, and it would be both strange and false if in the age of applied science some at least had not reflected and epitomised the peculiar character of post-industrial life. The more conservatively minded may reflect that the pursuit of beauty is part of the search for truth and that the artist begs to himself what he discovers, in a strong embrace, and is not always willing to recognise a newer find lest it should weaken his hold.

Although there is no direct connection between the two events it is not without significance that the formation of the Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall has almost coincided with a cleavage in the wider field of art in England. The

groupings have been described as Right and Left wings, or Conservative and Progressive, but they have nothing to do with politics. Tension is in the air and clear-cut division may be preferable to false unity.

Whether in London or at Saint Ives, a Society which professes to be representative must be catholic in outlook, or it fails to fulfil its purpose. The inclusion of craftsmen is a long overdue recognition of the fact that there is no artificial barrier between arts and crafts provided, as John Farleigh, M.S., M.A., President of the Arts and Crafts Society, stated at Saint Ives recently, "the craftsman is an artist and the artist a craftsman." Cornwall is rich in craftsmen who have received wide recognition as artists. From this alliance much may be gained, and the two exhibitions to be presented between April and September every year will be of a more intimate and varied character than has been customary in the past.

With whatever good intentions art societies are started, they have a way of becoming set, for lack of vitality and new blood. To counter this tendency, the Penwith Society differs in essential structure from other societies. Its total membership remains constant at forty artists, and ten craftsmen - Members; but fluidity is ensured by a system of biennial election. By this system, all Members automatically retire every two years, and a new Membership is elected by vote from among the number of the retiring Members plus such non-Members, not exceeding ten, whose work may have been proposed by some Member and have been twice exhibited by the Society. No Member, therefore, can claim any proprietary right, either to be re-included in the Society at an election, or to exhibit in the Society's exhibitions.

## PENWITH SOCIETY

OF ARTS IN CORNWALL

FOUNDED AS A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE DONALD SMART

President: Herbert Read DVO MC DON LITT D

Chairman: Leonard J. Fuller RCI RCA

Hon Secretary: Shearer Armstrong

Hon Treasurer: G. R. Downing

Publicity Officer: Philip Keeley

Committee: Barbara Hepworth Peter Lanyon Bernard Leach

Guido Morris Ben Nicholson Mimosé Peile

I K Smart (Lay Member)

No.	Title	Price	Artist
1	Green Apples	30 0 0	Jeanne du Maurier
2	Erosian	15 0 0	H. K. Jillard
3	From Eagles Nest, Zennor	7 9 0	Dorothy Bayley
4	The King of Prussia	—	Guido Morris
5	Colonel H. G. Monteth, DSO OBE	—	Leonard J. Fuller, RCI, RCA
6	The Quarry	75 0 0	the late Doris Smart, not
7	Landscape Under Moors	15 15 0	John Wells
8	Greenhouse	21 0 0	David Haughton
9	Concours	not for sale	"Fish"
10	Flowerpiece	25 0 0	Shearer Armstrong
11	The Artist	10 0 0	Garlick Barnes
12	Legend of Eve	21 0 0	Patricia Dearden (sponsored)
13	Cottages and Boats, Sennen	10 0 0	Garlick Barnes
14	St. Ives Bay	—	the late Alfred Wallis
15	Zennor	15 15 0	David Haughton
16	Young Norway	35 0 0	Marjorie Mostyn
17	The Broken Plate	10 10 0	George Manning-Sanders (sponsored)
18	"The Cornishman," Herbert Thomas Esq.	—	Leonard J. Fuller, RCI, RCA
19	Josias: Traditional Local Toys	20 0 0	Marion Grace Hocken, FRS, FRES
20	Organ Fund	—	Guido Morris
21	Chores	50 0 0	Marjorie Mostyn
22	Animals by the Sea	18 18 0	Sean Berlin
23	Portrait Head	10 0 0	Agnes E. Drey

No.	Title	Price	Artist
24	Garden and Garden	15 0 0	Shearer Armstrong
25	Teneriffe	35 10 0	Dod Proctor, RA
26	Masulo Baby	55 10 0	Dod Proctor, RA
27	Winged Figure (drawing for sculpture)	18 18 0	Sven Berlin
28	Phallack Church	12 0 0	Denis Mitchell
29	Grazing Horses	26 5 0	Bryan Wynter
30	Bread Street, London	31 10 0	J. Coburn Witherop, ASCA (London) (sponsored)
31	Wind Tossed (Needlework)	31 10 0	Alice Moore
32	Breton Faasants	not for sale	"Fish"
33	Trink Hill	20 0 0	Garlick Barnes
34	Sailing Ship & Birds in a Thicket	—	the late Alfred Wallis
35	Toulouse - Lautrec	—	Guido Morris
36	Shamrock Lodge	7 0 0	Mimosé Peile
37	Arles, France	not for sale	Madeline Wells, RCA (sponsored)
38	Shops Across the Way	15 0 0	Leonard J. Fuller, RCI, RCA
39	West Penwith	5 5 0	Dorothy Bayley
40	Head of a Girl	45 0 0	David Cox, RSWA
41	Still Life	30 0 0	Shearer Armstrong
42	Fishermen's Ballet	25 0 0	Mary Jewels
43	Margaretta	30 0 0	Marion Grace Hocken, FRS, FRES
44	Harbour, Truro	10 0 0	Tom Early
45	Dahlias	9 0 0	Agnes E. Drey
46	The Rock	20 0 0	Norman Cairns (sponsored)
47	Jennifer	—	Denis Mitchell
48	November Morning (needlework)	110 5 0	Alice Moore
49	Still Life (Punch and Judy) Feb. 28th, 1949	140 0 0	Ben Nicholson
50	By the Window	40 0 0	David Cox, RSWA
51	Farms at St. Just	25 0 0	Mary Jewels
52	Mimosé with Ferns	25 0 0	Jeanne du Maurier
53	The Sisters	42 0 0	H. Segal
54	The Elements (animal symbolism) (needlework)	16 16 0	Alice Moore
55	Portsmouth, 1949	25 0 0	Peter Lanyon
56	Towednack	20 0 0	Denis Mitchell
57	Lolent, March 8th, 1949	150 0 0	Ben Nicholson
58	The Red Blouse	50 0 0	David Cox
59	Sandreed	25 0 0	Mary Jewels
60	Breton Sunday Party	not for sale	"Fish"

No.	Title	Price	Artist
61	Rosemary	25 0 0	H. Segal
62	Still Life (Woodstock) Feb. 15th 1949	140 0 0	Ben Nicholson
63	Bridge and Ferry	15 15 0	Bryan Wynter
64	Bird	15 15 0	D. Alicia Lawrenson (sponsored)
65	Monks, Florence	0 0 0	Peter Lanyon
66	West Penwith	50 4 0	W. Barnes-Graham
67	Malakoff, St. Ives, 1949	18 18 0	David Haughton
68	Georgia Hill	15 15 0	Bernard Leach
69	The Path	5 5 0	Isobel Heath
70	Pennine Head, Isles of Scilly	15 0 0	W. Barnes-Graham
71	Fregethen, 1949	21 0 0	G. Manning-Sanders
72	The Old Boat	10 10 0	John Wells
73	Landscape, 1949	10 10 0	Dod Proctor, RA
74	Baby in Long Clothes	25 0 0	Marjorie Mostyn
75	Through the Doorway	25 0 0	Bryan Wynter
76	Crayfish (unframed impression)	1 1 0	H. Segal
77	Lulu and Her Kitten	21 0 0	John Wells
78	Landscape, 1949	10 10 0	W. Barnes-Graham
79	St. Ives (II) 1949	18 18 0	Mimosé Peile
80	Boats in the Car Park	7 0 0	R.E. Ragg (sponsored)
81	Spring at Idles	15 15 0	Tom Early
82	Old Town Bay, Scilly Isles, 1949	10 0 0	Dicon Nance
83	Elm Fruit Dish	2 2 0	D. A. Leach
84	Light Brown Jar	not for sale	Norman Cairns (sponsored)
85	Pendour - wood sculpture with colour	175 0 0	Barbara Hepworth
86	Two Figures (elm wood)	150 0 0	Barbara Hepworth
87	Two Forms (white marble)	350 0 0	Barbara Hepworth
88	Torso (Rocals)	not for sale	Lippy Lipschitz (sponsored)
89	Beer Set of Jug and Six Mugs	7 0 0	D. A. Leach (sponsored)
90	New Zealand Beech Bowl	2 2 0	Robin Nance
91	Earthenware Enamel Tom Cat	1 10 0	R.E. Ragg (sponsored)
92	Oak Trestle Table	not for sale	Robin Nance
93	Colodon Porcelain Tea Set	10 0 0	Bernard Leach
94	"Hand Sculpture," brown ebony	not for sale	Norman Cairns (sponsored)
95	Stoneware Jar, Olive and Rust	15 0 0	Bernard Leach
96	Set of Fire Irons - poker, tongs, log fork (armour bright)	prices on application	A. Cairns
96a	Bar Trivet (armour bright)	—	A. Cairns
97	Poker and Tongs (plain)	—	A. Cairns
98	Toast Fork, Poker, Tongs and Shovel (chased)	—	A. Cairns
99	Stoneware Jar (rust on blue decor)	5 0 0	D. A. Leach
100	Elm Chair	0 0 0	Dicon Nance

THE STUDIOS ARE LISTED IN ORDER CONSIDERED CONVENIENT  
TO OUR VISITORS

Studio Address	Artist's Name
Leese Studio, Trelyon (First turning right past "Cornish Arms")	Misomé Peile
Morvah Studio, The Warren	Helen Seddon Mary Phillips
The Warren Studio	Malcolm Haylett
Ocean Wave Studio, St. Andrew's Street	W. A. Gunn
Lanham's Gallery, High Street	
Blue Studio, The Wharf (Saturday only)	Geo. F. Pennington, F.R.I.B.A.
Rose Lodge Studio, The Wharf	A. T. White Clare White Dorothy Rayley
Pewwith Gallery, Fore Street Arts Hall Murals	
Meadow Way House Studio	Marion Hocken, R.O.I.
2, Porthmeor Studios	E. E. Rice Agnes Drey Alivia Lawrenson
3, Porthmeor Studios	Geo. F. Brailehaw, R.M.A. Kathleen Bradshaw
5, Porthmeor Studios (Saturday only)	L. F. Walsh
9, Porthmeor Studios	Shearer Armstrong
10, Porthmeor Studios (Also at Sleep Inn)	H. Segal, R.B.A.
11, Porthmeor Studios	Leonard J. Fuller, R.O.I., R.C.A. Marjorie Mostyn, R.C.A. Dorothy Mostyn
St. Ives School of Painting (17, Back Road West)	Monica Bateinan J. D. Brookes

Studio Address	Artist's Name
St. Ives School of Painting (contd.)	N. J. Butler Mrs. Crawshaw J. P. Duke Ellis Grantham Mrs. C. M. Lucas E. M. Neate Rex Patterson Linden Travers
Back Road Studio	William Redgrave
Dragon Studio	Hugh E. Ridge, R.M.A.
Loft Studio	Bernard Ninnies, R.B.A., R.O.I.
St. Ives Society of Artists, New Gallery, Norway Square	S. J. Lamorna Birch, R.A., R.W.S. Chas. Pears, R.O.I., R.M.A. John A. Park, R.O.I. Helen Stuart Weir, R.B.A., R.O.I. Bartholomew Sharp, R.B.A., R.O.I. Charles Simpson, R.F. Jack Merriott, R.F. Frederick Cook, R.W.A. Frank Jameson, R.W.A. Arthur Hamblly, R.W.A. Stuart Arnold William Piner Eileen Inard E. Lovell Andrews Pauline Hewitt, R.B.A., R.O.I. Charles Breaker Geo. J. Gillingham Denise Law The late Tom Robinson Violet M. Digby
2, Piazza Studios	Tina Shaw Lang
4, Piazza Studios	Miss L. S. Roberts
7, Piazza Studios	Gai Layton
Fauna Studio, Mount Zion	Frank Lang Wharton Lang

Teas at a moderate charge will be served at the Arts Club, on Thursday, 4-5-30, for members of the Arts Club and their friends.

4 & 5 Porthmeor Galleries, Winter Exhibition, St. Ives Society of Artists. Admission 6d.	Including paintings by Sir Arnesby Brown, B.A. Dame Laura Knight, D.B.E., R.A., R.W.S. S. J. Lamorna Birch, R.A., R.W.S. Dod Procter, R.A. Stanley Spencer
7 Porthmeor Studios	Frances Ewan Mrs. K. Temple Bird Dorothy A. Lawrenson
8 Porthmeor Studios	Mrs. L. E. Walsh Ethel Stocker
No. 9 Porthmeor Studios	Moffat Lindner, R.W.S., R.O.I. Bernard Ninnies, R.B.A., R.O.I. Shearer Armstrong
No. 11 Porthmeor Studios	Leonard J. Fuller, R.O.I., R.C.A. Marjorie Mostyn Misomé Peile Denise Williams
The St. Ives School of Painting	Col. L. D. Woolcombe Beryl Woolcombe Marjorie Allington J. H. Galt A. T. White Hilda Freeman, B.A. Misomé Peile Francis Barry, R.B.A. Harry Rountree
17, Back Road West	M. E. Thompson Isobel Heath
No. 2 Piazza Studios 1-4	Garlick Barnes
No. 5, Piazza Studios	Joan Manning-Saunders
Across the road to:- The Loft Studios Norway Lane	
The Loft Studios	
Up the Stennack to:- Ferglen Studio Below Sandrow's Lane	

Arthur Whiting

**Abstract Paintings  
Sculptures  
Mobiles**

Including recent works by

Robert Adams  
Sven Blomberg  
Terry Frost  
Adrian Heath  
Barbara Hepworth  
Anthony Hill  
William Johnstone

Kenneth Martin  
Ben Nicholson  
Eduardo Paolozzi  
Victor Pasmore  
Ceri Richards  
Vera Spencer  
William Turnbull

22 May-11 June 1951

AIA Gallery 15 Lisle Street Leicester Square WC2

You are invited to  
visit the Exhibition of  
**BRITISH  
ABSTRACT ART**

Paintings - Sculpture - Mobiles - Gouaches  
Water-colours - Etchings

at Gimpel Fils Galleries  
Private View Tuesday 31 July  
1951 from 3-7.00 pm

May 3720 50 South Molton Street, London W1

**22**

FITZROY STREET, LONDON W.1

3RD WEEKEND EXHIBITION

Paintings Sculpture Mobiles Constructions  
Furniture Photomurals  
May 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Each day 11 am-7 pm

Arranged by John Weeks

Robert Adams  
Terence Conran  
Raymond Elston  
Terry Frost  
Adrian Heath  
Nigel Henderson  
Anthony Hill  
Roger Hilton

Kenneth Martin  
Mary Martin  
Ben Nicholson  
Eduardo Paolozzi  
Victor Pasmore  
William Scott  
Vera Spencer  
Denis Williams



**REDFERN GALLERY**

20 Cork Street, Burlington Gardens, London, W.1

the Directors have pleasure in inviting you  
to the private view on Tuesday, January 11, 3 p.m.  
of works by

**"9 ABSTRACT  
ARTISTS"**

Robert **ADAMS**  
Terry **FROST**  
Adrian **HEATH**  
Anthony **HILL**  
Roger **HILTON**  
Kenneth **MARTIN**  
Mary **MARTIN**  
Victor **PASMORE**  
William **SCOTT**

featured in the Alec Tiranti publication

**JANUARY 11  
TO JANUARY 29**

**HEAL'S**

**PICTURE GALLERY  
AND CRAFTSMAN'S MARKET**

have pleasure in inviting you to the opening by

**PHILIP JAMES, C.B.E.**  
(Director of Art at the Arts Council)

on

Tuesday March 1st 1955 at 2.30 p.m.

of an exhibition of

**ABSTRACT DESIGNS**

arranged by Porthia Prints to include

**PAINTINGS · SCULPTURE · PRINTS  
&  
SCREEN PRINTED TABLE LINEN**

by

TONY WELLS · PETER LANYON · TERRY FROST  
ROGER HILTON · ROBERT ADAMS · WILLIAM GEAR  
DENNIS MITCHELL · MICHAEL SNOW · BARNES GRAHAM  
PATRICK HERON · BARBARA HEPWORTH  
STANLEY DORFMAN · T. FERRESTON

136 TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, LONDON, W.1.

**Appendix 34**

Collection of invitations for diverse configurations of Group exhibitions in  
post-war London

# NEWLYN ART GALLERY

is an educational charity and receives funding from South West Arts. We also receive funding from Cornwall County Council and Penwith District Council.

20 October to 17 November

Margaret Mellis

recent work

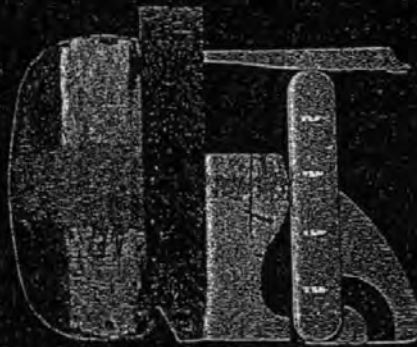
Using driftwood from the shore near her home in Southwold, Margaret Mellis makes powerful and brightly coloured relief constructions. Still working with assurance and panache at the age of 87, she brings new life to left-over pieces of boats or beach huts, often with a touch of telling humour.

This work from the furthest eastern coast of Britain is at home here in the far south west, partly because it is rooted in the radical modern art of the mid-twentieth century, which Mellis absorbed while she lived near St Ives during the Second World War.

The exhibition is a collaboration with Austin-Desmond Fine Art, London, who are showing a retrospective exhibition at the same time. There is an illustrated catalogue with essays by David Batchelor and Ian Jeffrey.

Even  
all events  
otherwise  
Gallery  
Saturday  
7pm  
Elizabeth  
Margaret  
converses  
Paul Ken

cover  
Margaret  
In the N  
below & o  
Margaret  
Fisherman  
left  
Margaret  
Rust & Ye





WBG Supplementary List p2

47/00/A	Black Movement Over Two Reds, 2000 68 x 77 cm acrylic on arches paper
55/00/A	Maroon & Orange on Black, 2000 66.4 x 77 cm acrylic on arches paper
57/00/A	Untitled, 57/00, 2000 57.5 x 76 cm acrylic on arches paper
13/01/A	April 2, 13/01, 2001 57.8 x 77 cm acrylic on arches paper
26/01/A	Eclipse Series No 1, 2001 56.8 x 77 cm acrylic on arches paper

30/00/A Untitled July, 2000  
58 x 77 cm  
acrylic on arches paper

32/00/A Untitled, 32/00, 2000  
58 x 76.5 cm  
acrylic on arches paper

11/01/A March (Spiral), 2001  
57 x 76.7 cm  
acrylic on arches paper

25/01/A Untitled (April), 2001  
57 x 76.8 cm  
acrylic on arches paper

27/01/A Eclipse Series No 2, 2001  
56.8 x 77 cm  
acrylic on arches paper

28/01/A Untitled 28/01, 2001  
56.9 x 77 cm  
acrylic on paper

WBG list of work shown in St Andrews 92

01/92/A	Lanzarote, 1992 44.8 x 74.7 cm acrylic on paper
23/92/G	Barcelona Series No 1, 1992 58.8 x 76 cm gouache on arches paper
41/92/G	Fire Series No 3, 1992 57 x 76 cm gouache on paper
23/94/O	Fireworks, 1994 69 x 89.4 cm oil on canvas
04/94/G	Constellation Series No 1, 1994 57.2 x 77 cm gouache on paper
07/94/G	Constellation Series No 4, 1994 57.4 x 76.7 cm gouache on paper
18/95/G	Constellation Series, 94/95 57 x 76 cm gouache on paper
23/96/A	Scorpio Series 2, No 6, 1996 57 x 76.8 cm acrylic on arches paper
66/98/O	Jupiter's Dream, 1998 167.7 x 122 cm oil on canvas
02/99/A	Vision in Time, 1999 77 x 68 cm acrylic on arches paper
07/99/A	Night Walk (Porthmaor) No 5 58 x 77 cm acrylic on arches paper
02/00/A	Surprise Series No 3, 2000 57.8 x 77 cm gouache on arches paper
06/00/A	Easter, 2000 58 x 77 cm acrylic on arches paper
18/00/A	Untitled (June), 2000 57.4 x 77 cm acrylic on arches paper

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham – supplementary works available

Cat.No	Title
15/88/G	Orange Lemon & Black, 1988 56.6 x 76 cm gouache on paper
26/88/G	Jellyfish & Seaweed, 1988 57 x 77 cm gouache on paper
05/89/G	Shallow Water Porthgarra 2, 1989 58.4 x 76.2 cm gouache on paper
03/92/G	Eye of the Storm Series, No 3, 1992 58 x 77 cm acrylic on arches paper
21/92/G	Barcelona Celebration of Fire, No 3, 1992 76.5 x 57.6 cm gouache on paper
03/94/A	Fire series (Green) No 5, 1994 68 x 93 cm acrylic on canvas
29/96/A	Scorpio Series 2, No 12, 1996 56.8 x 76.8 cm acrylic on arches paper
37/96/A	Scorpio Series 2, No 18, 1996 56.7 x 76.4 cm acrylic on arches paper
43/96/A	Scorpio Series 2, No 24, 1996 57.5 x 76.5 cm acrylic on arches paper
51/97/A	Scorpio Series 3, No 39, 1997 57.5 x 76.6 cm acrylic on arches paper
53/97/A	Geever Series, No 1, 1997 57 x 77 cm acrylic on arches paper
03/99/A	Untitled, 03/99, 1999 57.6 x 76.8 cm acrylic on arches paper

## Appendix 36

The list of exhibits for *W. Barns-Graham: Painting as Celebration*, exhibition,

Crawford Arts Centre, St Andrews, 31 Aug. – 21 Oct. 2001

## ILLUSTRATIONS



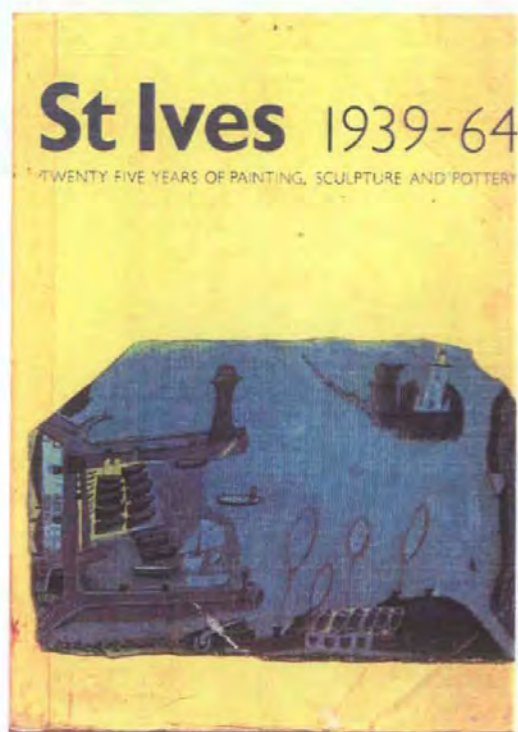


Fig 1



Fig 2



WBG with Margaret 'Peggy' Mellis,  
Edinburgh College of Art, 1930s

Fig 3



Indian StyleHouse. 1981

Fig 4



Fig 5

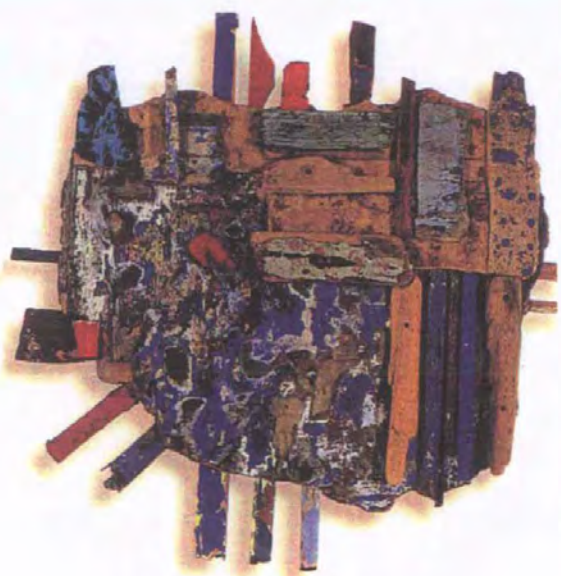


Fig 6



Fig 7





Fig 8a



Fig 8b

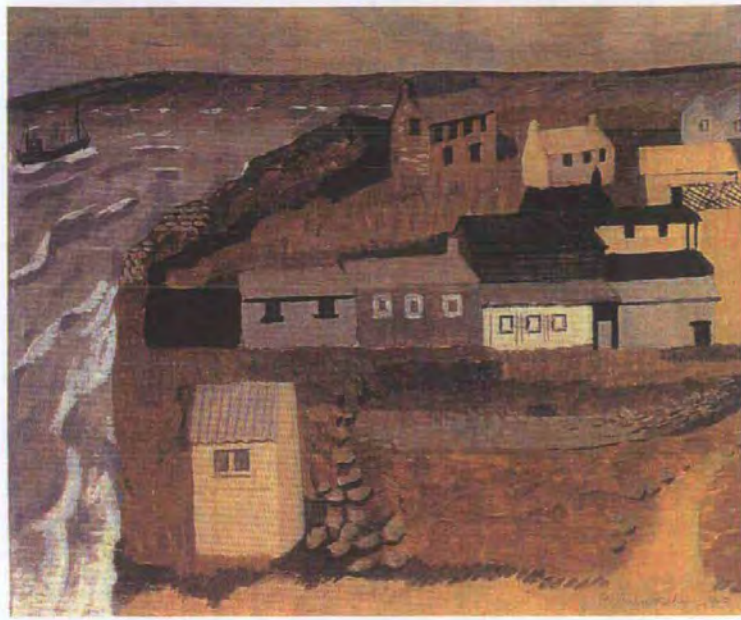


Fig 10



Fig 9





Fig 12

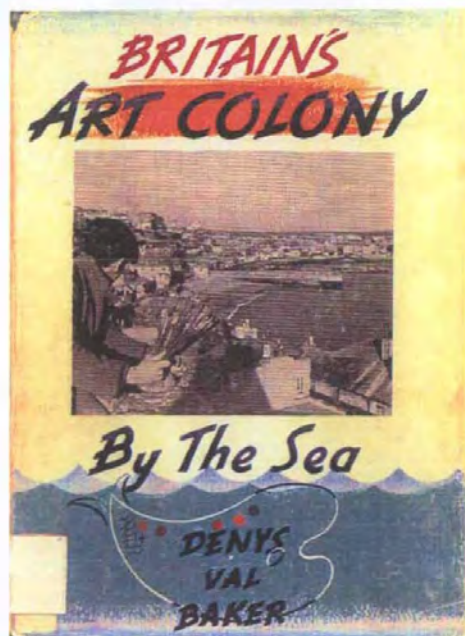


Fig 13

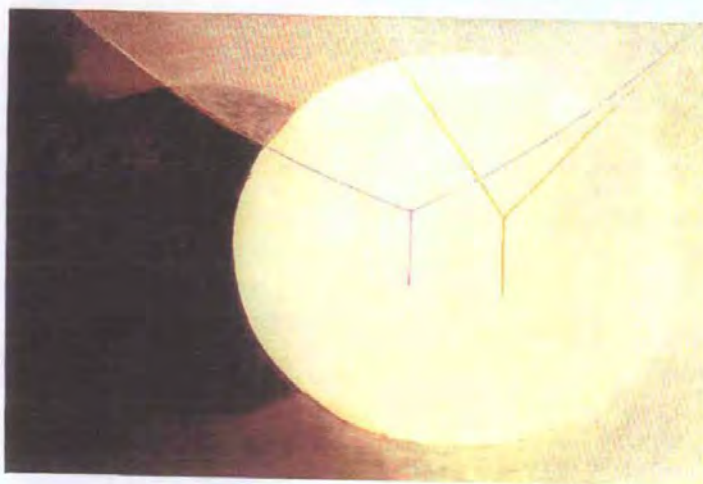


Fig 11



Fig 14

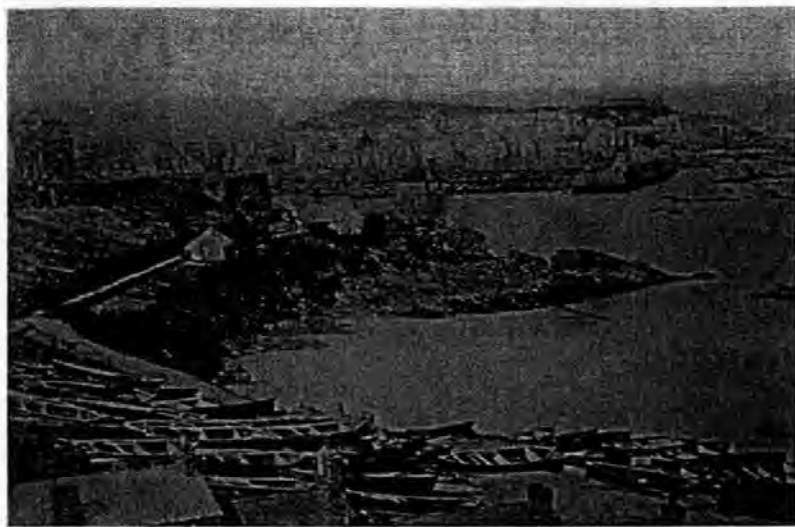


Fig 15



Fig 16



Fig 17



Fig 18



Fig 19





Fig 20



Fig 22



Fig 21



Fig 23



Fig 24





Fig 25



Fig 26

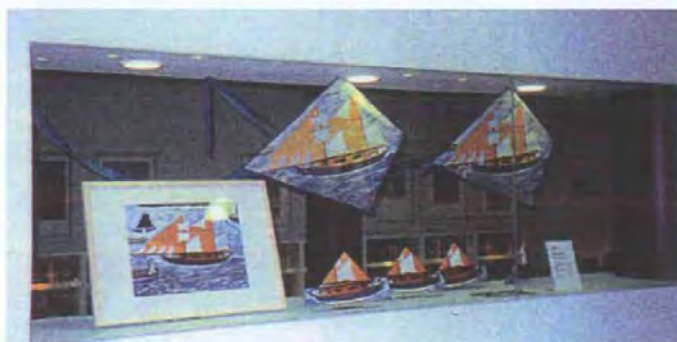


Fig 27



Fig 28



Fig 29





Fig 30

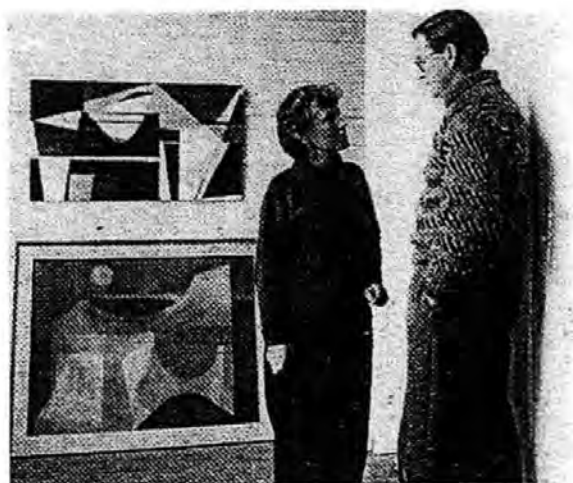


Barns-Graham and David Lewis on Porthmeor  
St Ives, c.1954, photograph: Roger Mayne



Barns-Graham in No. 1 Porthmeor Studios, 1954  
photograph: Roger Mayne

Fig 31



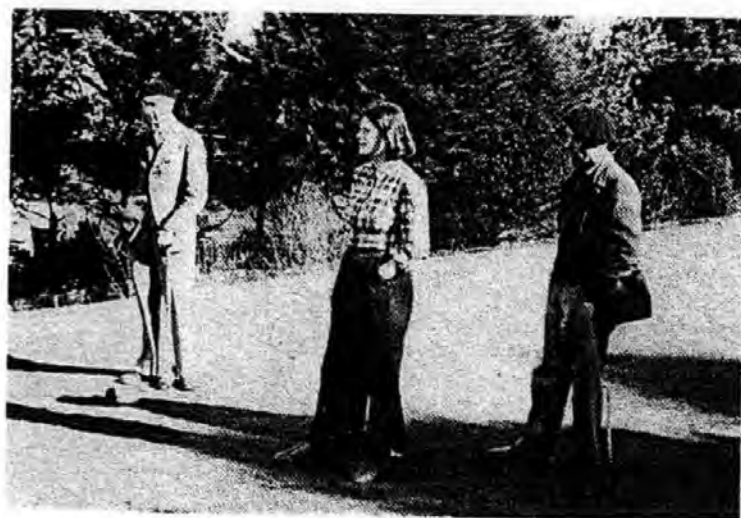
Wilhelmina Barns-Graham (with David Lewis in her  
Porthmeor studio) c.1953, Tate Gallery Archives

Fig 32



Adrian Stokes (with Margaret Mellis and Telfer at  
Little Park Owles) c.1942

Fig 33



Herbert Read, Margaret Gardiner and Ben Nicholson playing croquet  
at Little Park Owles, Carbis Bay, 1942, photograph: Barbara Hepworth  
*Trustees of Ben Nicholson Estate*

Fig 34



Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo, Carbis Bay 1940s.  
*Nina and Graham Williams*

Fig 35



Fig 36

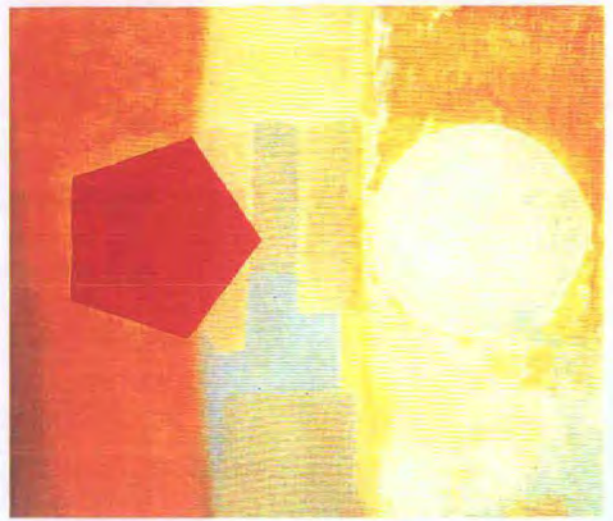


Fig 37

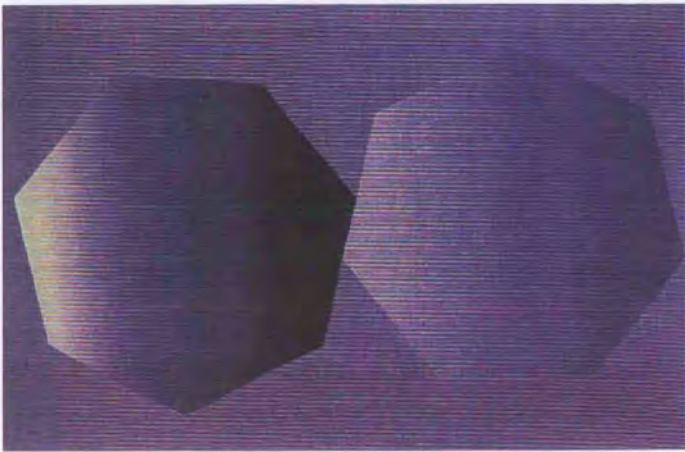


Fig 38



Fig 39

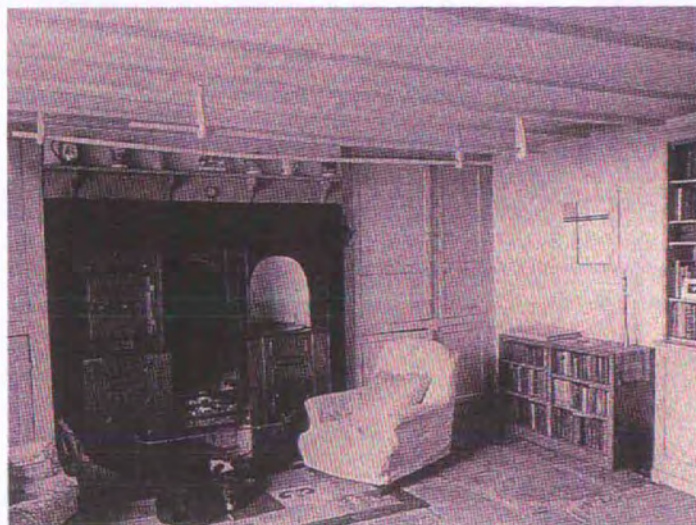


Fig 40





Fig 41



Fig 45

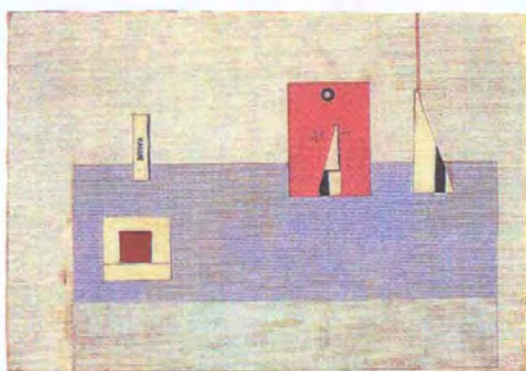


Fig 42

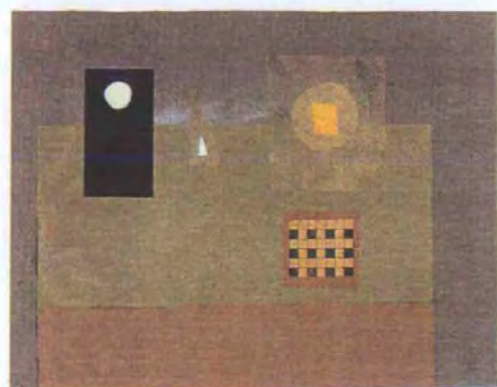


Fig 43



Fig 44



The Green Line, 1905. Oil on canvas, 40.5 x 32.5 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; J. Rump Collection.

Fig 46





Fig 47



Fig 48



Fig 49

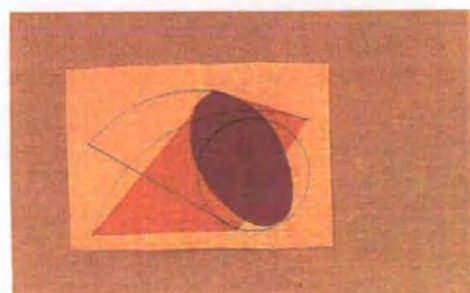


Fig 50



Fig 52



Fig 51





Fig 53



Fig 54



Fig 55

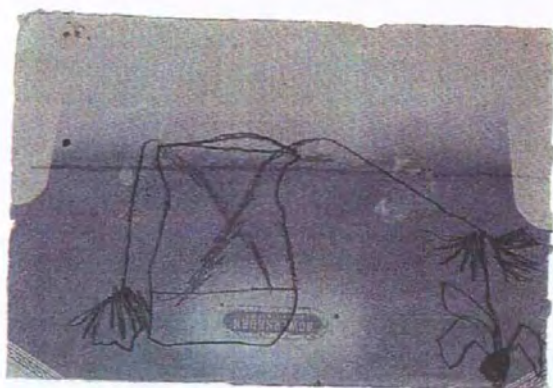


Fig 56



Fig 56a



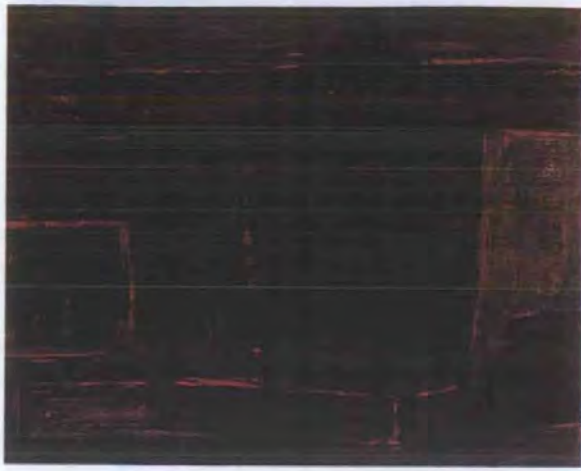


Fig 57



Fig 60



Fig 59



Fig 58



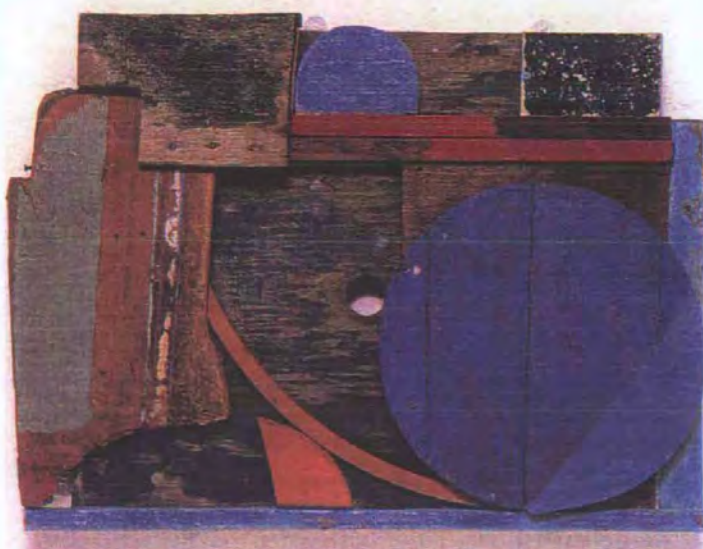


Fig 61



Fig 62





Fig 63

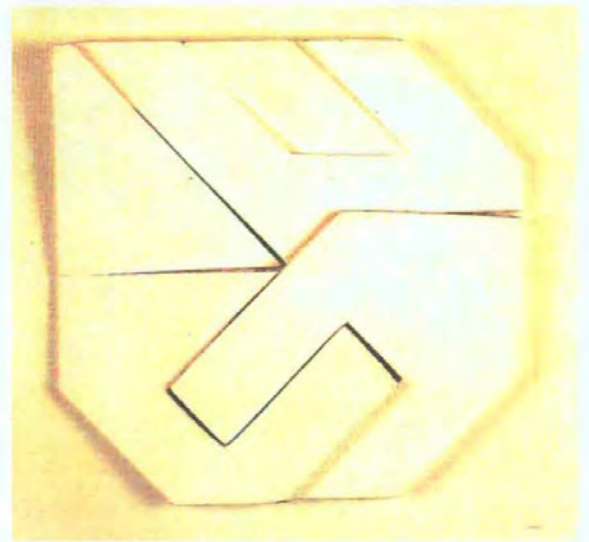


Fig 64

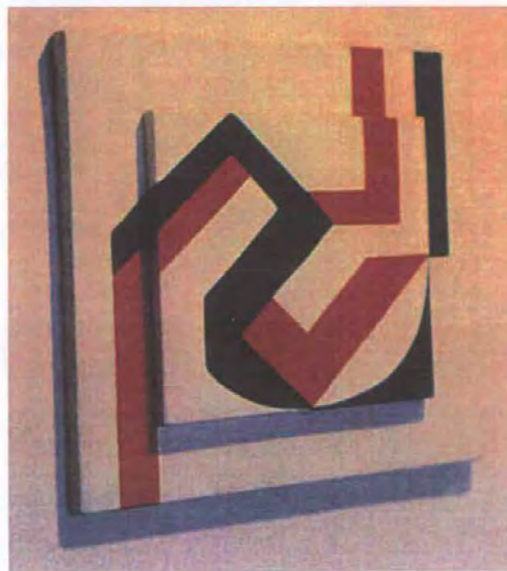


Fig 65



Fig 66a



Fig 66b



Fig 67



Fig 68

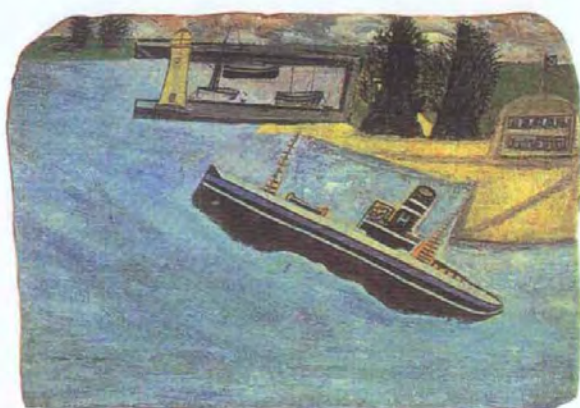


Fig 69

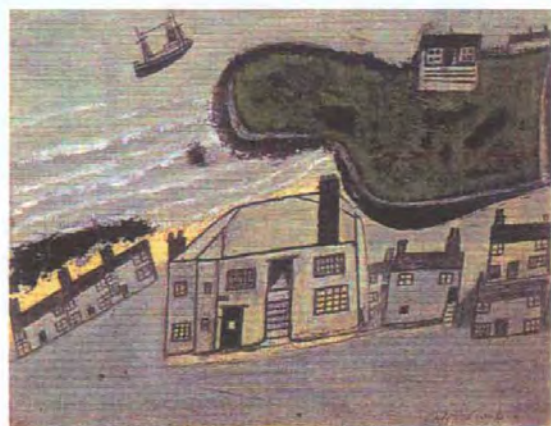


Fig 70



Fig 71





Fig 72



Fig 74a



[Carroll Hunt Farm] 1951

Fig 76



Fig 74



[Stones] 1951

Fig 73



Fig 75



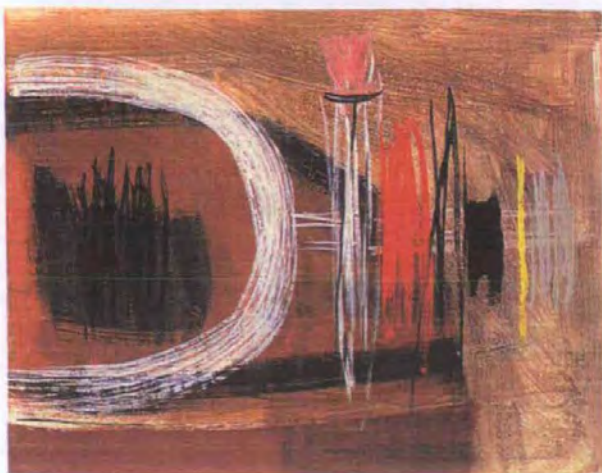


Fig 77

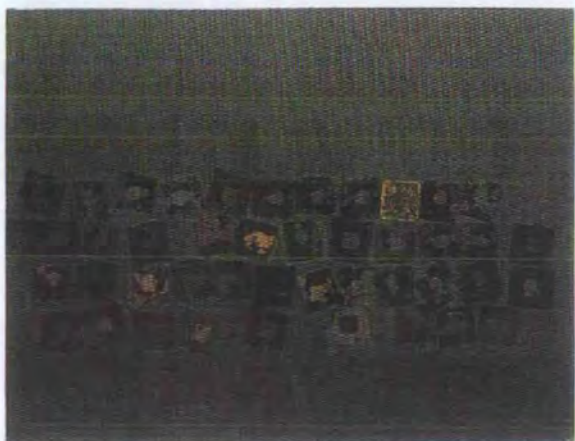


Fig 78



Fig 79

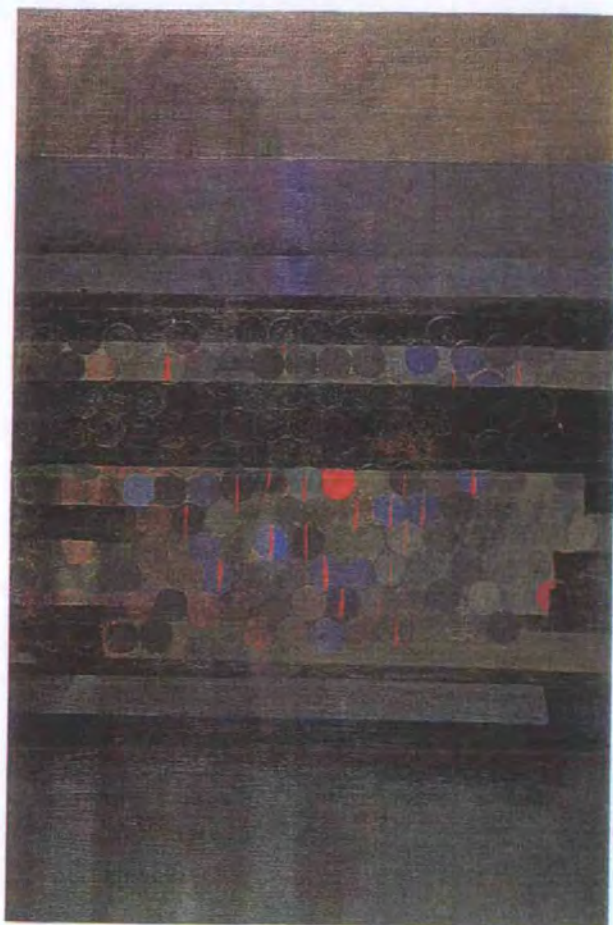


Fig 80

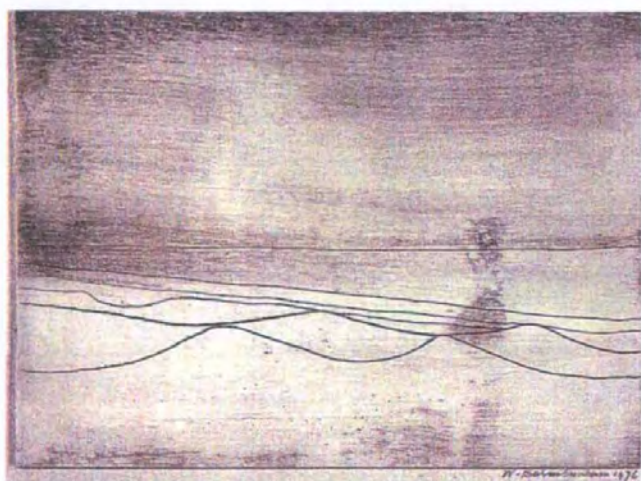


Fig 81





Fig 82

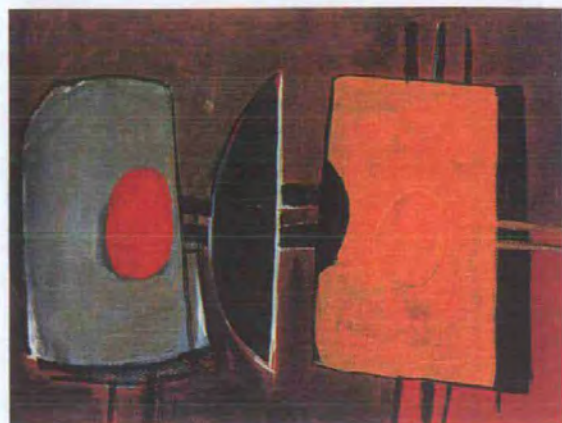


Fig 84

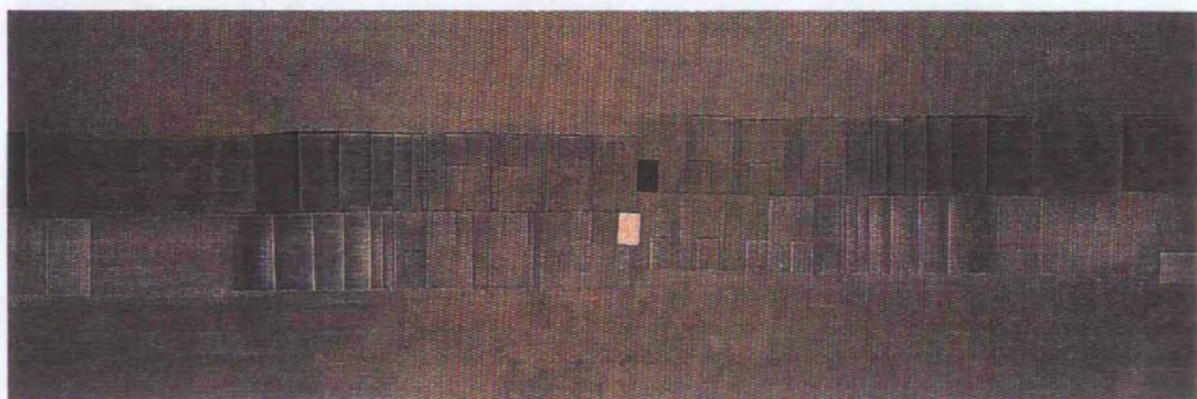


Fig 83



Fig 85

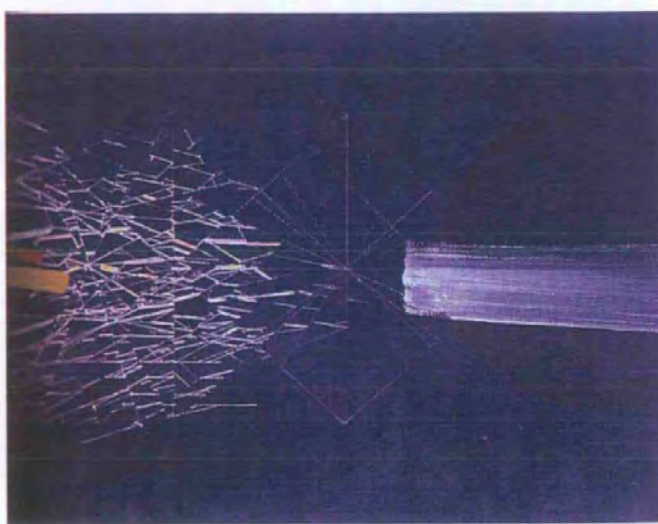


Fig 86





Fig 87



Fig 88



Fig 89



Fig 90



Fig 91



Fig 92





Fig 93



Fig 94



Fig 95

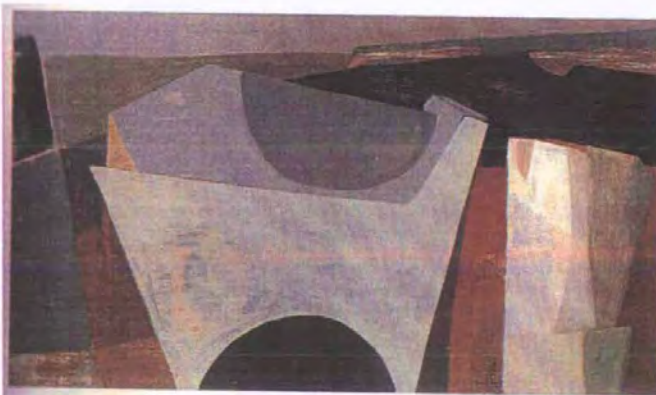


Fig 96



Fig 97



Red Painting 1957

Fig 98

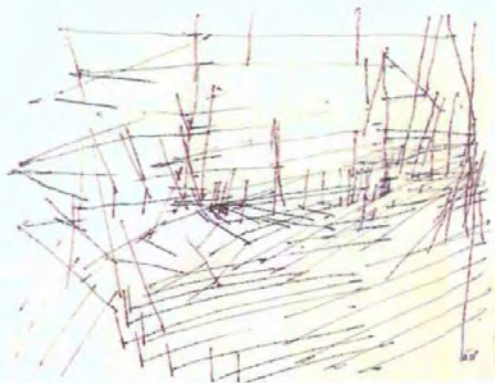
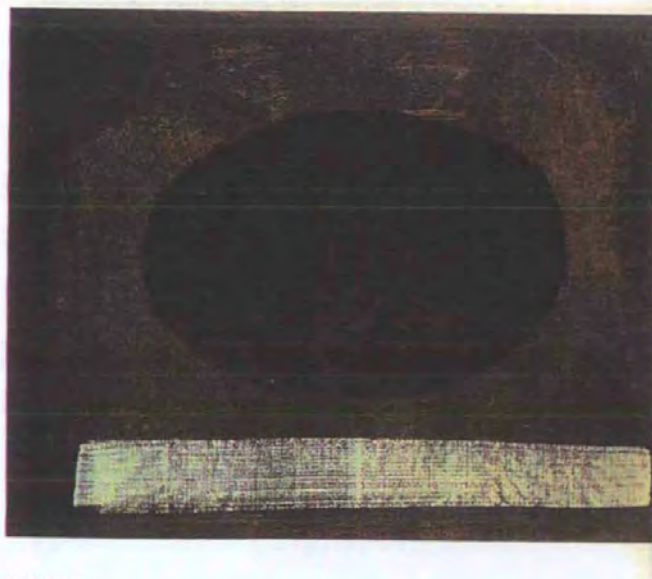


Fig 99



Black Field 1958

Fig 100



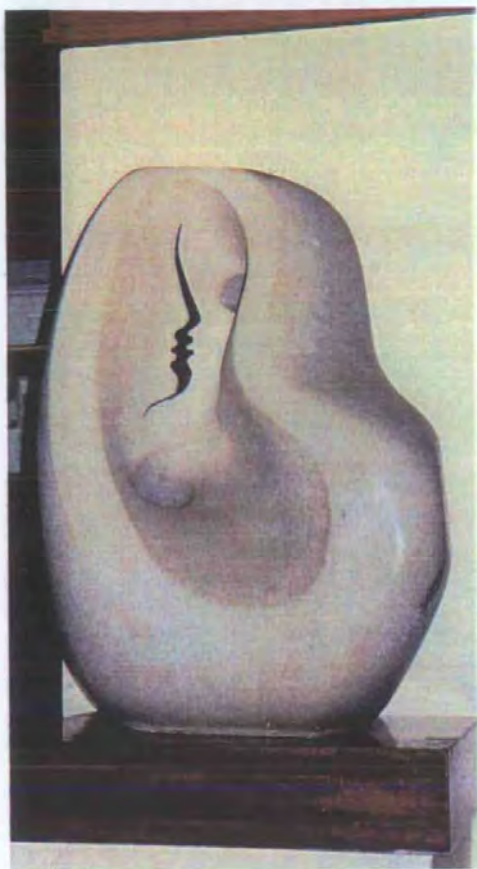
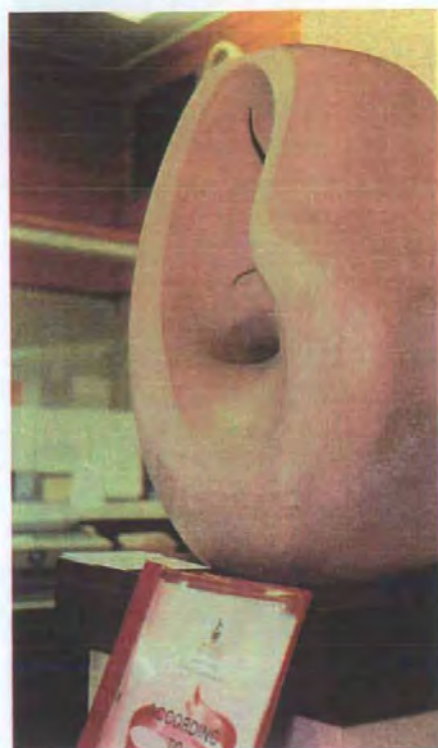


Fig 101



101a

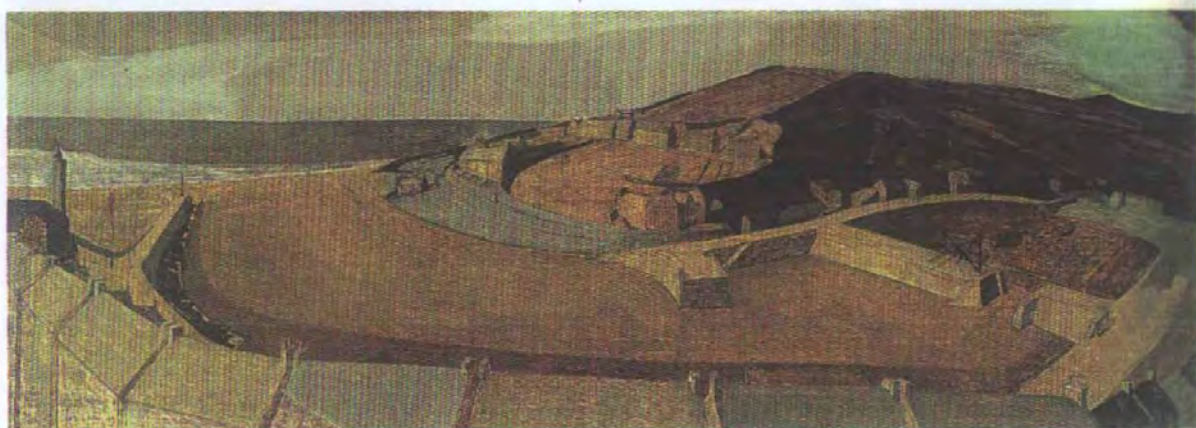


Fig 102



Fig 103



Fig 104 a



Winners at the Penwith Society's Festival Competition.— Painting: W. Barns-Graham (left) with her "Cornish Landscape (Evening) Porthleven, 1951"; Sculpture: Barbara Hepworth (rt.) with her "Rock Form, Penwith (Portland Stone) 1951"; centre, Bernard Leach's lidded pot. Judges: Mr. John Rothenstein (Tate Gallery), Mr. Philip James (Arts Council) and Ald. Gerald Cock. The prize-winning entries are to be presented to the Borough of St. Ives.

Reprinted by  
courtesy of  
"The Cornishman."

Fig 104b



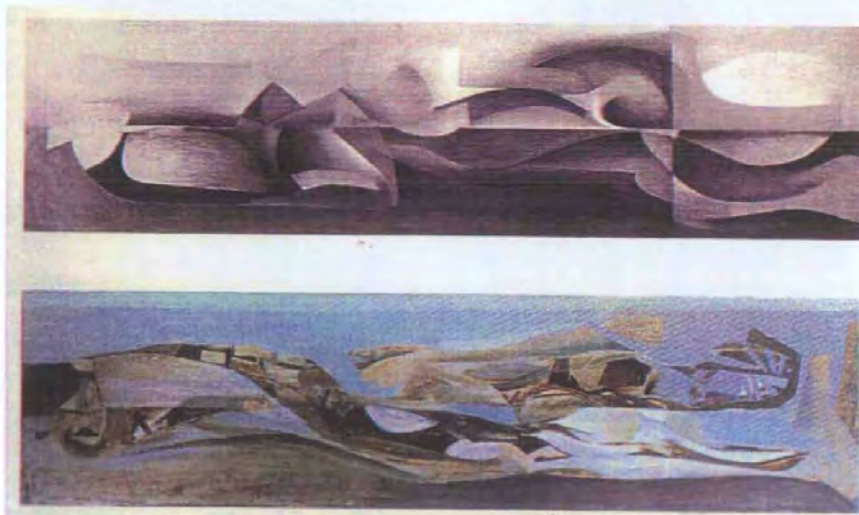


Fig 105 (top) & 106.



Fig 108



Fig 107



Fig 109



Fig 110



Glacier Knot 1978

Fig 111



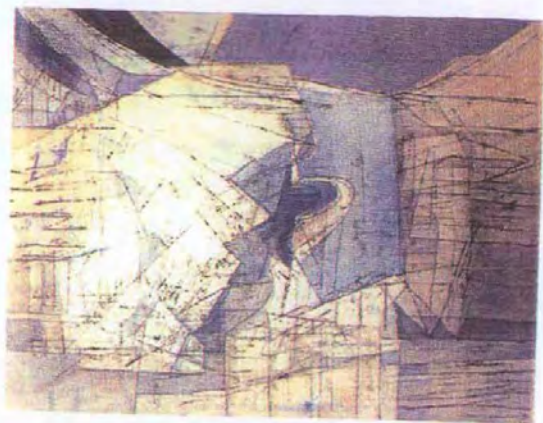


Fig 112



Fig 113



Peter K. Kohnen 1991

Fig 114

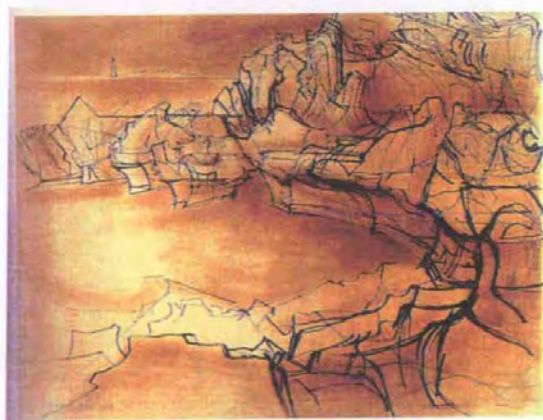


Fig 115



Fig 116

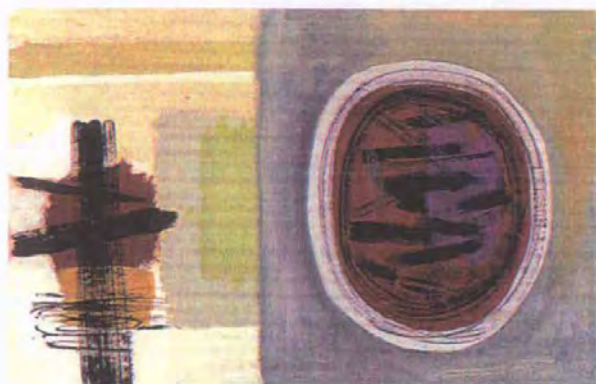


Fig 117

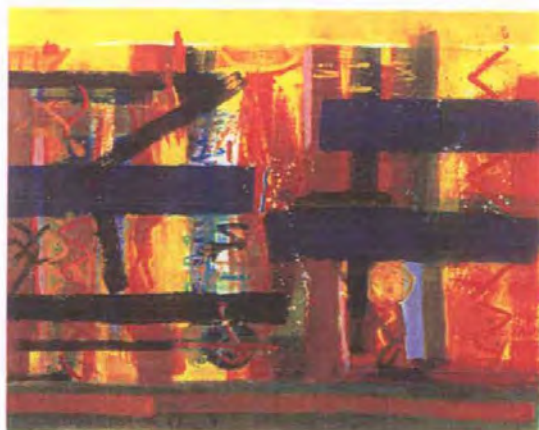


Fig 118





Fig 119

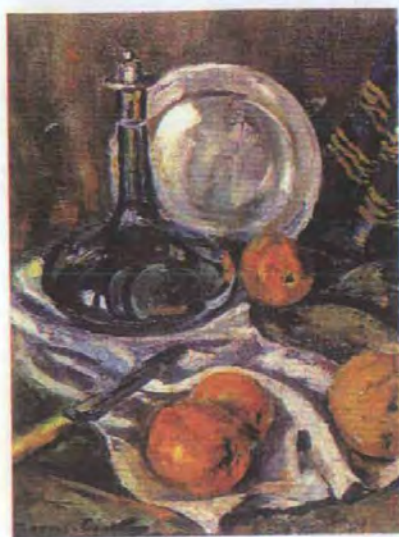


Fig 120

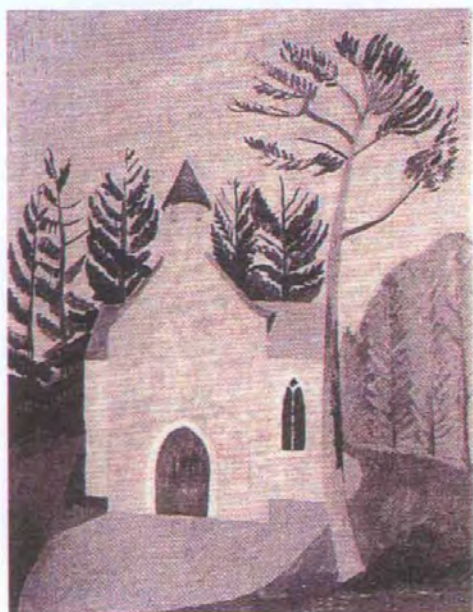
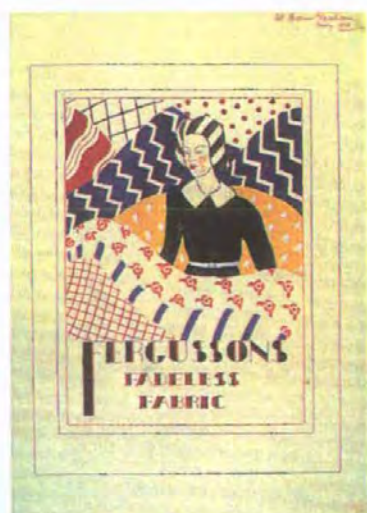


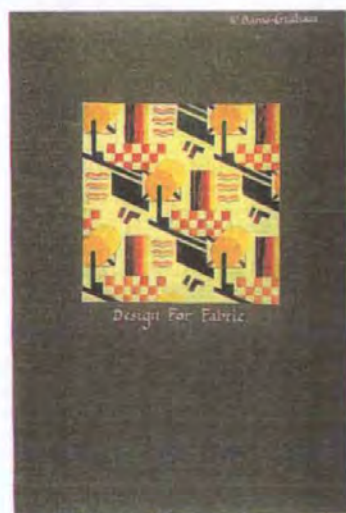
Fig 121



Fig 122



fergussons Fadeless Fabric: 1933 May



Design for Fabric: (n.d.)

Fig 123





Fig 124



Fig 125

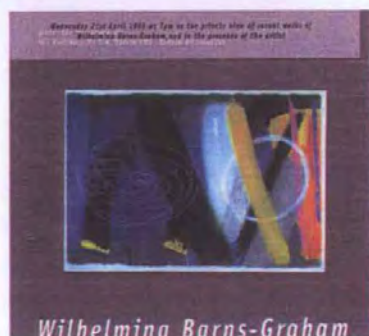


Fig 126



Fig 127



Fig 128



Fig 129





Fig 130



Fig 131



Fig 132



Fig 133

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